RUPP

The Romanticism of Dequincey

English

A. M.

1911

THE ROMANTICISM OF DEQUINCEY

BY

LEWIS WILLIAM RUPP

A. B. CARTHAGE COLLEGE, 1910

THESIS

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the

Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

IN ENGLISH

IN

THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

OF THE

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

1911

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

THE GRADUATE SCHOOL

June 3 1911

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION BY

Lewis William Rupp

ENTITLED The Romanticism of De Quincey

BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING THIS PART OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE

DEGREE OF Master of Arts

Stuart P Sherman In Charge of Major Work

Stuart P Sherman Head of Department

Recommendation concurred in:

Daniel K. Dodge
Edward Fulton
Jacob Zeitlin
H. G. Paul
E. C. Baldwin

Committee on Final Examination

INTRODUCTION.

This thesis is presented with the complete realisation that neither does it cover adequately all the ramifications of the subject, nor does it approach in any sense an adequate treatment of the few topics that have been selected. It will amply deserve criticism for the too apparent biographical tinge, and for the lack of that disinterested review in the light of contemporary romanticism which would lift it more nearly into the proper sphere of the thesis. In apology the author of this paper can claim only to have followed those things which appealed to his own individual mood while reading De Quincey's works. The time required to read and to collate the entire body of essays and papers from De Quincey's pen alone, all suggestive, precluded any attention to outside criticism and comment, such as might be found in the papers of Hazlitt, Coleridge, and other contemporaries of De Quincey, or in critical estimates and biographies. Thus but one phase of the subject has been attempted, viz. the romanticism of the man as he himself expressed it in his own writings.

No one definition of romanticism proves satisfactory when De Quincey is the subject. His multifarious works, touching on practically every subject, defy classification. The definition suggested by Henry A. Beers, who would limit the romantic movement

to the revival of the medieval,[1] certainly will not serve; neither does the revival of admiration for nature cover all the ground. Again, in contrast to the radical and revolutionary doctrines of many men of the time, De Quincey held firm to conservative Toryism and to rigorous orthodoxy in affairs of the church. In view of this very marked diffusion of interests, romantic and pseudo-classical, curiously inter-mingled in what was none other than romantic fashion, I have, at sacrifice of method, approached the problem piece by piece, trusting to collect sufficient evidence to justify a debit and credit account in closing, with the evidence on the side of the Romantic School. The unfortunate arrangement of topics refuses to fit together more coherently. Should the end faintly justify the body of the thesis in its meandering progress, perhaps the whole will appear to have repaid the labor involved in its preparation.

But few references will be given. What few do appear will refer chiefly to passages from De Quincey himself. The edition used was that edited by David Masson, "The Collected Writings of Thomas De Quincey," in fourteen volumes, published by A. and C. Black, London, in 1896 and 1897. References to the "Works" will be to the volume and page in this edition. References will also be made in the first chapter to David Masson's biography,[2] and to the fuller biography by H. A. Page (A. H. Japp).[3]

---

1 - Henry A. Beers. A History of English Romanticism in the Nineteenth Century. v.
2 - David Masson. De Quincey (English Men of Letters Series). Macmillan. 1909.
3 - A. H. Japp. Thomas De Quincey: his Life and Writings. 1890.

Neither will I append a bibliography, though possessing a moderately complete one on cards. Two very complete lists are so easily accessible that a list which adds nothing to them would serve no purpose. The bibliography prepared by the Manchester Public Free Library is perhaps the most convenient and satisfactory.[1] It contains a chronological list of the essays, giving the pages and volumes of the periodicals, or the publisher, if the work happened to be published in a separate volume. It also contains a very complete list of biographical and critical works, magazine articles, bibliographies, and portraits, with the items conveniently numbered.[2] The second list is that contained in the "Works," the appendix to volume xiv.[3]

---

1 - Thomas De Quincey. A bibliography based upon the De Quincey collection in the Moss Side Library. Compiled by J. A. Green. Manchester. 1908.

2 - There are a total of 796 numbers, bringing the list up to publications in December, 1907.

3 - Other bibliographical lists may be found under the head "De Quincey" in the catalogues of the British Museum, and the Library of Congress.

INDEX.

CHAPTER I.

THOMAS DE QUINCEY .

Thomas De Quincey was born in Manchester on the 15th of August, 1785. He died in 1859, the eighth of December, in his Lothian Street lodgings, Edinburgh.

The personal eccentricities of the man were such as always to give his name interest in the romantic school. He may be said to have been an embodiment of romantic traits and disposition, though a peculiar attachment to classical tenets, or shall we say a shrewd common sense inherited from his merchant father, served him for a very valuable balance wheel. In some respects classical constituents of his nature have the upper hand, especially when he made his attempt to support Alexander Pope, though even here it is probable that his inner judgment was in undecided conflict with his habit of adherence to favorite men and ideas.

In his appearance De Quincey was pre-eminently romantic. His editor, David Masson, points out the startling accuracy of some half dozen lines from Thomson's "Castle of Indolence" if taken as a description of De Quincey in his old age.[1] The lines read

"He came, the bard, a little druid wight
Of withered aspect; but his eye was keen,
With sweetness mixed. In russet brown bedight,
As is his sister of the copses green,
He crept along, unpromising of mein.
Gross he who judges so! his soul was fair,
Bright as the children of yon azure sheen."

The exactness of this description, as Professor Masson is careful to

---

[1] - "Collected Writings of Thomas De Quincey." Masson. General preface. vol. i.

explain, becomes apparent when we recollect that De Quincey's prose is largely "bardic," and that through all his long life he was never once outside the British Islands, except for his two visits to Ireland, spending his days in Manchester, Bath, North Wales, London, Chester, Oxford, the English Lake District, and in the largest proportion, Edinburgh and its vicinity. De Quincey wrote of himself: "I, that write this paper, have myself a mean personal appearance; and I love men of mean appearance." [1] Perhaps once of the best pictures of De Quincey is that given by Gilfillan:"Conceive a little, pale-faced, woe-begone, and attenuated man, with short indescribables, no coat, check shirt, and neckcloth twisted with a wisp of straw, opening the door of his room in - - Street, advancing towards you with a hurried movement and half-recognizing glance, saluting you in low and hesitating tones, asking you to be seated, and after he has taken a seat opposite you, but without looking you in the face,beginning to pour into your willing ear a stream of learning and wisdom as long as you are content to listen or to lend him the slightest cue."[2]

The De Quincey family had come to England with the Norman Conquest, as De Quincey himself took pride in explaining. Probably the descent was originally Norwegian; the companion of the Conqueror

---

1 - Works. vol. v. 19.

2 - " " xi. 326. Note.

came immediately from Quincé in Normandy. In the twelfth century the family gained no little eminence, one or two becoming Earls of Winchester, but for many generations there had been a lapse into obscurity.The prefix De had been dropped for presumably a long period: Thomas himself revived it. In America the family had come into political prominence. [1]

Interest in De Quincey's father centres chiefly in his book, written at the age of twenty-three or four, an undertaking in his day rather remarkable when to have written a book at all was a credit to a man's activity of mind.[2] As a merchant the elder De Quincey attained success, collecting a very comfortable fortune, unfortunately injudiciously managed after his death. Thomas saw but little of him until 1792 when he came to Greenhay to die of consumption.

One cannot but occasionally criticise the mother's attitude towards her dreamy son, but for his own part De Quincey expressed nothing but the greatest respect for her. "Better to stand ten thousand sneers than one abiding pang such as time could not abolish, of bitter self reproach" for some unfilial act.[3] Of her character he

---

1 - Works. i,167; ii,286,457. Masson. 1.

2 - " i, 21. The title of this book was "A Short Tour in the Midland Counties of England, performed in the summer of 1772:together with an Account of a Similar Excursion undertaken September,1774." The contents reveal a fairly strong gift of observation, a practical discernment, an eye for the picturesque, and other qualities which we associate with the romantic mind. The book reviewed industrial conditions as a man engaged in business would set down his observations. The elder De Quincey carried on an extensive foreign trade.

3 - Works. iii,285.

said:"My dear excellent mother, from the eternal quiet of her decorous household, looked upon every violent or irregular movement, and therefore upon mine at present[1] much as she would have done upon the opening of the seventh seal in the Revelations."[2]

Though born in the city of Manchester, the earliest incidents leaving any permanent impression on De Quincey's mind were connected with The Farm and Greenhay, the first a simple rustic dwelling, the second an elaborate mansion, enclosed within the privacy of its own gardens and hedges. The family remained at Greenhay until 1796, when his mother removed to Bath, to indulge one of her fancies for change of establishment. To the boy Thomas, dreamy, and engrossed in what he found in nature and such books as the "Arabian Nights," the literary atmosphere of Greenhay could scarcely have been less than severe.[3] To music there was "too little attention paid." Despite the fact that De Quincey was but eleven at the termination of this period in his life, so much of value does it reflect upon several of his most prominent characteristics that it deserves much more than mere passing mention.

The unusual circumstances of his father's return and death produced a ghastly effect on the young De Quincey's imagination, though twice before this had he become acquainted with death. When he was two years of age his sister Jane died. Rumored ill-treatment of the dying child by a nurse had affected him, but the most pathetic emotion was his attempt to comprehend her absence. "I was sad for Jane's absence. But still in my heart I trusted that she would come again.

---

1 - His clandestine departure from the Manchester Grammar School.
2 - Works. iii, 312.
3 - Cowper was highly admired in the home, and Dr. Johnson revered "partly for his courage, for his sturdy and uncompromising morality, according to his views and his general love of truth." See also Japp's biography, page 10.

Summer and winter came again- crocuses and roses; why not little Jane?"[1] His first full realisation of death, at the age of six, very nearly overwhelmed him.[2] His eldest sister, Elizabeth, by her intellectual precocity, had become his confidante, and to her alone did he impart his inner feelings. According to his own statement, never again after her death did he have the courage to utter his emotions, and so influential was that event on his whole life that perhaps because of it he resembled little for good or ill that which he should have been.[3] When he was told that Elizabeth must die: "Blank anarchy and confusion of mind fell upon me. Deaf and blind I was, as I reeled under the revelation. I wish not to recall the circumstances of that time, when my agony was at its height, and hers, in another sense, was approaching. Enough it is to say, that all was soon over; and the morning of that day had at last arrived which looked down upon her innocent face, sleeping the sleep from which there is no awaking, and upon me sorrowing the sorrow for which there is no consolation." Secretly visiting the death chamber he saw a remarkable vision: "There lay the sweet childish figure; there the angel face; and, as people usually fancy, it was said in the house that no features had suffered any change. Had they not? The forehead, indeed- the serene and noble forehead- that might be the same: but the frozen eyelids, the darkness that seemed to steal from beneath them, the marble lips, the stiffening hands, laid palm to palm, as if repeating the supplications of closing anguish- could these be mistaken for life? Had it been so, where-

---

[1] - Works. i, 35.   [2] - Works. i,35-50.

[3] - It may be asked with very good reason whether his life-long meditations upon this event did not greatly affect his estimate of its importance.

fore did I not spring to those heavenly lips with tears and never-ending kisses? But so it was not. I stood checked for a moment: awe, not fear, fell upon me; and, whilst I stood, a solemn wind began to blow,- the saddest that ear ever heard. It was a wind that might have swept the fields of mortality for a thousand centuries. Many times since, upon summer days, when the sun is about the hottest, I have remarked the same wind arising and uttering the same hollow,solemn, Memnonian, but saintly swell: it is in this world the one great audible symbol of eternity. And three times in my life have I happened to hear the same sound in the same circumstances- viz.,when standing between an open window and a dead body on a summer day.

"Instantly, when my ear caught this vast AEolian intonation, when my eye filled with the golden fulness of life, the pomps of the heavens above, or the glory of the flowers below, and turning when it settled upon the frost which overspread my sister's face, instantly a trance fell upon me. A vault seemed to open in the zenith of the far blue sky, a shaft which ran up forever. I, in spirit,rose as if on billows that also ran up the shaft forever; and the billows seemed to pursue the throne of God; but that also ran before us and fled away continually. The flight and the pursuit seemed to go on forever and ever. Frost gathering frost, some Sarsar wind of death, seemed to repel me; some mighty relation between God and death dimly struggled to evolve itself from the dreadfulantagonism between them; shadowy meanings even yet continue to exercise and torment, in dreams, the deciphering oracle within me. I slept- for howlong I cannot say; slowly I recovered my self-possession; and, when I woke, found myself standing, as before, close to my sister's bed."

. It is significant that De Quincey devotes seventy-five pages to his "Introduction to the World of Strife," which is for the most part a series of reminiscences of his brother William, the oldest of the family.[1] Domination by this whirligig of a brother continued for three years and a half, a most miserable period for Thomas. Yet it was a period of value to the boy, for we learn from hints now and again that he was up to his majority considered in danger from consumption, and it would have been a very easy transition from the gloomy condition that followed his sister Elizabeth's death, to complete surrender to the disease, had not the rough whirlwind in which his brother constantly involved him, forced his mind into other channels. Thomas had received all his training from gentle sisters until William appeared, with his record for unruliness and genius for mischief. Older than Thomas by five or six years he promptly began to despise his younger brother, and took no pains in letting the fact be known. As it happened, contempt was what Thomas particularly sought after at this period as essential to his peace of mind, though unfortunately, he hints, he sometimes reached an altitude in dispute which staggered his brother. However, on the grounds of physical effeminacy and general idiocy in his brother, William mantained his exalted station quite effectually. De Quincey stated himself that the latter charge was probably true; as to the former, there was no question about it.

William had many astounding traits. He learnedly attempted books on all subjects from theology to necromancy. Ghosts, he said, were not unlikely to form a federation against a single generation of

---

[1] - Works. i,58ff.

men, in which contest the fate of the men would be highly problematical. Again, he would read lectures to his nursery audience on philosophy, and he derived a process by which he would walk upon the ceiling on the principle of a whirling top.[1] After his lectures were no longer appreciated, he cultivated the tragic drama , with indifferent success, however, finding himself scarcely able to supply new characters at a sufficiently rapid rate to compensate for the very great number of fatalities among his dramatis personae. Very important, likewise, were the affairs of the rival kingdoms Tigrosylvania and Gombroon, and the warfare with the sanscullote factory boys.[2]

Richard, or "Pink," was a quiet, shy boy, of unusual beauty, and with a deep-seated pride.[3] He is to be remembered because in one or two characteristics he was the counterpart of Thomas.[4] With utter disregard for Richard's temperament, his guardians sent him to a brutal schoolmaster, under whom he suffered indignities. Like his brother Thomas, Pink had a very uncertain intuition in practical matters, and to escape the tyrrany of his school, he ran away to sea, embarking in a South Sea whaler. He suffered captuee by pirates, and later served on an English man of

---

1 - He gave this scheme up as impracticable because a gentleman ought not to tolerate being whipped incessantly by a gardener, the whipping and the gardener being essential parts of the scheme. The De Quincey children seem to have been very aristocratic in their principles.
2 - Works i,88ff. 3 - He suffered much mortification from the attentions of ladies who could not resist fondling the singularly beautiful boy. 4 - Works. i,287-315; iii,57,313; iv, 2.

war. The responsibility for this wreck of what might have been a distinguished career De Quincey laid to his guardians. He himself held them as unwise in the discharge of their duties, and was constantly in difficulties with them. On the principle that the child contains all the characteristics of the man in embryo, the child should have the broadest care possible.[1] Under the usual system of guardianship this is never given. In the majority of cases the guardian does not have any deep interest in the child's welfare, and even should he prove exceptional, the methods in use prevent perfectly sympathetic relations between the guardian and ward. Passive neglect and negative injuries, more than positive acts of harm, "extensively disfigure the representative picture of guardianship all over Christendom."[2]

As I have already mentioned[3] Cowper, Dr. Johnson, and the more severe religious and moral doctrines held sway at Greenhay. The De Quincy children, however, in addition to the Bible, which was always an inspiration, especially enjoyed Mrs. Barbauld and the "Arabian Nights."[4] Elizabeth was yet alive, and with her Thomas would ponder over the opening passages of Aladdin, and its relation to the universal connection of all things. From the good Manchester pastor, under whose care Thomas began his education, he received a good grounding in Latin and a start in Greek. By a peculiar requirement that the boy should make mental abstracts of the Sunday sermons, this worthy minister did the world great service by cultivating a most tenacious memory in the young De Quincey.

---

[1] - Works. i, 149.
[2] - " iii,277.
[3] - page four, footnote three.
[4] - Works. i, 121ff.

In 1796 (at twelve years of age) he was sent to the Bath Grammar School, where he became a little prodigy in Latin, and very facile in Greek, until early in 1799 when a blow on the head threatened serious consequences and he was removed from the school. While he was recovering, his mother read to him among other books Sir William Jones's "Asiatic Researches," Milner's "Church History," Johnson's "Rambler," Hoole's "Translation of Ariosto and Tasso," and Bentley's edition of "Paradise Lost," while he began also at this time lessons in French.[1] His experiences at Winkfield, his next school, have little interest in our present connection, except for the fact that he was popular in the school.[2] He had not been in that school for much over a year when the invitation from Lord Westport to visit Ireland was accepted. In company with Westport De Quincey had met George III, and had mentioned in conversation with the king the fact that he was acquainted with Robert of Gloucester's "Metrical Chronicle." Indeed the medieval always had interest for DeQuincey,[3] and we find that his visit to Ireland deepened his interest, with the addition of enthusiasm over Irish scenery and customs. He was present at the ceremony of the installation of the knights of Saint Patrick, and was also present at the last sitting of the Irish house of peers. On his return to England he visited Laxton, where he met the Carberry's, and enjoyed the fine library. Lady Carberry had become a disciple of Hannah More, and in her zeal to know whether the authorized version of the Bible could be always relied on to give the sense of the original, De Quincey (the lad of fifteen) assured her no, and instructed her in Greek.

---

1 - Works. i,159. 2 - Works. i,160; iii,247.

3 - " i, 168.

This period of his life reveals him associating with aristocracy, and very naturally it had a powerful stimulus on his mind. Immediately following his visit to Laxton, he went unwillingly to the Manchester Grammar School, this being his guardians' selection. His experience here was unpleasant from the first. Though he does not so explain it, he actually was quite an aristocratic young fellow, and association with tradesmen's children, after his Irish visit, was not to his liking. Again the monotony of the life, the plainness of the surroundings, and the intolerable routine told upon him. He had some advantages in the ability to visit friends in the city, and to indulge in reading, but he was sadly restricted in the amount of exercise allotted. For this there was no provision, and in De Quincey's case the result was a stomach complaint which the blundering apothecary who prescribed for him but intensified.[1] To a young man who found vigorous walking a necessity, such confinement was torment, yet no attention was paid to his plea that he be removed. Consequently he took matters into his own hands and after a pathetic farewell from the school rooms, he slipped out one night in July, 1802.

He had at first thought of visiting Wordsworth, whom he already admired, but finally he set off on foot for Chester, where his mother had completed a new experiment in home organizing. She had bought and added to a pretty little building known as the "Priory" until she had completed a very neat establishment.[2] Her son's unexpected and decidedly unconventional arrival was a cause of extreme annoyance to her, but his uncle, Colonel Penson, just returned from India, took the escapade more as a schoolboy prank, and by his in-

---

1 - Works. i,396.

2 - " iii, 299 - 344.

fluence, De Quincey obtained permission to spend the summer wandering at will, on an allowance of a guinea a week. From July to November he wandered in the open, chiefly in North Wales, exploring the country, and spending the time after his own fashion.[1] By little acts of kindness, by doing odd jobs, he made his way, and, living expenses amounting to very little, he had a thoroughly worth while summer. But when winter approached, off he flew to London on a new adventure.[2]

He went to London with the expectation of borrowing a sufficient sum to mantain him until his coming of age. However the rascal into whose hands he fell[3] kept him dangling until he was forced to accept the offer of a roof from Brunell, a devil to money lenders. This was a dismal house, where De Quincey was allowed to spend the nights, and to live literally from the crumbs of Brunell's scanty meals. His sole companion was a wretched girl of about ten, whose exact relation to the man Brunell he never discovered. The two companions in misery cheered each other a little, and give by their condition an atmosphere to this portion of De Quincey's narrative that is suggestive of Dickens.[4] During the day De Quincey wandered about the city, making strange acquaintances with other peripatetics, with whom he preserved absolutely innocent relations.

One of these was Ann, a girl of sixteen, with whom he formed what must have been an interesting acquaintance[5] On one occasion he became faint from lack of food, and Ann spent probably her last money to buy wine for him. So far gone did he think himself that he attributed to the stimulation from this wine perhaps

---

1 - Japp's biography, page 63. 2 - Works, i,399; iii,350 - 378.
3 - The Jew Dell. 4 - Masson, page 30. 5 - Works, iii,360ff.

his escape from death. When a few weeks later he attempted to find Ann and to reward her, he could find no trace of her. She had vanished, but would henceforth be a constant visitor in his dreams. The immediate cause of his absence was an attempt to get security for a loan from Lord Westport, with unsuccessful result. At this time he again came into communication with his guardians, and after some little negotiation went to Oxford on one hundred pounds a year.[1]

Merely the main currents in his Oxford career need outline here. First to be noticed was his shyness. In marked contrast to the brilliant record in social life that his friend-to-be, Wilson, was making, De Quincey kept to himself, reading prodigiously, and impressing all who were fortunate enough to meet him with the conviction that here was an uncommon man. Already from a chance acquaintanceship in Wales, he had formed some general notions of German literature, in particular of Richter, Hippel, and one or two other writers little known. Now at Oxford he became acquainted with a German by the name of Schwartzburg, and devoted himself seriously not only to the study of German literature, but of metaphysics as well, and of Immanuel Kant in particular. It was during his Oxford residence also that he began careful study of English literature. From earliest childhood he had been a very sincere admirer of the literature of his own nation. In his Oxford period he began the study of the great underlying currents of English literature, the transitions between periods, and the characteristics of each. Seventeenth century prose he believed inimitable; in the earlier English writers he took great delight. The eighteenth century he valued least, while his best powers he gave to the study of the

---

[1] - Works, ii, 9 - 80.

literature of his own time, especially to Wordsworth, with whom he had already corresponded, to Coleridge, and to one or two others of the new school. In his failure to take his degree he resembled more than one romanticist. In De Quincey it is likely that his excessive shyness had already begun to discover traps set for him at every turn, or it may have been nothing but pure backwardness that kept him from the vivâ vòce. He had taken the written examination, and had made a very flattering record. According to his own story the difficulty over the vivâ vòce arose out of disgust because a change had been made in the language in which the examination was to have been given.

He had already begun the use of opium, the date being the spring or autumn of 1804.[1] He left Oxford in 1807 or 1808 and removed to London. His time was spent largely in travelling between London, his mother's new domicile at Westhay, and the Lake District, for he was rapidly forming his friendships with Lamb, Coleridge, and Wordsworth. For some reason he had no lack of money, and in November he completed the scheme by which he loaned three hundred pounds to Coleridge.[2] In London he ostensibly studied law at the Middle Temple, but in actuality did little more than pursue his erratic studies, chiefly by association with the literary celebrities of the city.

In November, 1809, he took up his residence in the Wordsworth cottage, Grasmere, being twenty-four years of age. For the next twenty-seven years he was to claim this cottage as his home. Just before this time he had seen through the press Wordsworth's "Concerning the Relations of Great Britain, Spain, and Portugal, as

---

[1] - Works. iii, 379.
[2] - Japp's biography, 97ff.

affected by the Convention of Cintra,"[1] and the arrangement by which he became a neighbor to the Wordsworth's grew in part from the satisfactory manner in which he saw to the publication of this paper. Dorothy Wordsworth's influence seems to have been very strong, as well.

"And what am I doing amongst the mountains? Taking opium. Yes; but what else? Why, reader, in 1812, the year we are now arrived at, as well as for some years previous, I have been chiefly studying German metaphysics, in the writings of Kant, Fichte, Schelling,&c. And how, and in what manner, do I live? in short, what class or description of men do I belong to? I am at this period- viz. in 1812- living in a cottage; and with a single female servant, who, amongst my neighbors, passes by the name of my "housekeeper." And, as a scholar and a man of learned education, I may presume to class myself as an unworthy member of that indefinite body called gentlemen. Partly on the ground I have assigned- partly because, from having no visible calling or business, it is rightly judged that I must be living on my private fortune- I am so classed by my neighbors; and, by the courtesy of modern England, I am usually addressed on letters, &c., Esquire, though having, I fear, in the rigorous construction of heralds, antique or antic, dressed like the knaves of spades or diamonds, but slender pretensions to that distinguished honour;- yes, in popular estimation, I am X. Y. Z.,[2] Esquire, but not Justice of the Peace, nor Custos Rotulorum. Am I married? Not yet. And I still take opium? On Saturday nights. And, perhaps, have taken it unblushingly ever since 'the rainy Sunday,' and the 'stately Pantheon,' and the 'beatific druggist' of 1804. Even so."[4]

---

[1] - Masson, page 44. [2] - The pseudonym over which many of his papers appeared. [3] - Works, iii - 397ff.

He was "never better in his life" than in 1812, but the next year he fell on bad times, suffering some private calamity, probably pecuniary. And in addition he then first felt the "pains of opium," the beginnings of those opium horrors, at which time his servitude to the habit began. In 1812 had occurred his strange spasm of grief over the death of little Kate Wordsworth.[1] In the winter of 1814 - 1815 he made a momentous visit to Edinburgh. His advent among the friends of Wilson left no ordinary impression; his conversational powers brought him very considerable respect. Of his life at Grasmere there was no event of paramount importance until his marriage in 1816. His wife, Margaret Simpson, came from the family of a Westmoreland landed farmer, a man of fair education, who had first hand acquaintance with Milton, Shakespeare, Pope and Addison. The marriage proved fortunate, ideal, so far as affection of the one for the other could make it so.[2]

In his life during the first year of his marriage, before opium again mastered him, he experienced probably his greatest happiness. Our best picture of this period is his own description of his cottage on one of the winter evenings of that year.[3] In 1818 and

---

[1] - Works. ii, 440

[2] - " ii,355; iii,377ff.; iv,5. The second reference is of particular importance. The paragraphs referred to contain a very beautiful tribute to his wife, at a time when he was in London, absent from her. The last lines read: "If I could allow myself to descend again to the impotent visions of childhood, I should again say to myself, as I look to the north, 'Oh, that I had the wings of a dove!' and with how just a confidence in thy good and gracious nature might I add the other half of my early ejaculation- "and that way I would fly for comfort!'"

[3] - Works. iii, 409ff. The noteworthy paragraph which begins: "Paint me, then, a room seventeen feet by twelve," and contains a very clever excuse by which he omits his own figure from the carefully detailed picture. It also pays a fine compliment to his wife.

1819 the depression from opium caused the abandonment, first, of his philosophical work "De Emendatione Humani Intellectus," and, second, of the "Prolegomena to all Future Systems of Political Economy," after the book had been advertised and arrangements made for printing it. In a period of recovered energy he had become enthusiastic over Ricardo, and had attempted to enter the same field. He actually did attempt a steady occupation in 1819, when he accepted the editorship of the "Westmoreland Gazette."[1] This editorial venture was not such a failure as might have been expected. By not residing in Kendal, De Quincey avoided much of the drudgery, and, considering that he was not by nature a journalist, he did well. Though he certainly set the paper far above the comprehension of the ordinary rural reader. [2] One very good thing resulted to De Quincey from his Tory editorship: he learned to like the sight of printed proofs, which Professor Masson deems important.[3] He was at this time looking to his friend Wilson for an opening into the literary arena, but he made his first appearance as a writer in London, not in Edinburgh, though still among acquaintances.

Taylor and Hessey, proprietors and editors of the "London Magazine," had the honor of ushering De Quincey before the world. Keats, Lamb, Hazlitt, and others of like calibre, had already offered of their choicest to this magazine, so that De Quincey became one of a very remarkable staff. His first contributions were the "Confessions,"

---

[1] - Masson, pages 65,66.

[2] - Masson, pages 67ff. A specimen sentence will illustrate the tone of the editorials: "The editor can assure his readers that his own personal friends in most of the Universities, especially in the three weightiest,- Oxford, Cambridge, and Edinburgh,- are quite competent in number and power to float the 'Gazette' triumphantly into every section and division of those learned bodies."

[3] - Masson, page 69.

in September and October, 1821. The extraordinary character of the "Confessions" brought them into instant popularity. The magazine gave the unusual praise of editorial comment on the "deep, eloquent, and masterly paper which stands first in our present number."[1] Scepticism doubted the truth of the matter, and brought out a letter in December, assuring that the incidents had occurred as narrated. In this number of the "London Magazine" appeared the paper on Jean Paul Richter, and the first of the "Analects." In this first period of literary activity (1821 - 1825) two incidents are significant, the criticism of Goethe and Carlyle,[2] and the translation of "Walladmor."[3].

During these four years De Quincey spent his time largely in London, becoming more and more intimate with Charles and Mary Lamb, but for the most part living in absolute solitude. He now made German literature a constant study, but became, if possible, more helpless in practical affairs.4

---

1 - There is some possibility that this editorial comment was written by Thomas Hood.
2 - To be mentioned in a later chapter.
3 - De Quincey had reviewed this German forgery in the "London Magazine" in 1824, and had been deceived into believing that it did have merit. When he undertook the translation, he discovered his mistake, and made a practical joke of the affair, putting in much of his own invention, and otherwise retouching the German story.
4 - See Masson, page 80. Mr. Knight, a friend, finds him in a very disreputable lodging house, the helpless possessor of a large draft which in his simplicity he has been unable to cash.

The second period of literary activity was in connection with "Blackwood's Magazine," through the influence of Wilson, and extended from 1826 to 1830. It comprised the "Laocoon," several papers on Kant, the essay "On Murder considered as one of the Fine Arts," and the "Toilette of the Hebrew Lady." He became a friend of Carlyle, who so forgot the caustic criticism of his "Wilhelm Meister" as to invite De Quincey to Craigenputtock. His pecuniary troubles continued, and in 1830 his family moved to Edinburgh, chiefly on the advice of Dorothy Wordsworth.

De Quincey had before him what we may term two periods of literary activity, his writing for magazines during the twenty-nine years, and the preparation of the edition of his works from 1850 or 1851 until his death. His magazine articles appeared in "Blackwood," "Tait," and after 1849, in "Hogg's Weekly Instructor." The list is too long for summary or mention, save of the "Sketches of Life and Manners from the Autobiography of an English Opium-Eater," in "Tait," about thirty articles in all, extending over the years 1834 to 1837. These papers contained the reminiscences of Southey, Wordsworth, and the other Lakists. So personal were they that the wrath of the families interested was aroused. De Quincey however had recognised from his first acquaintance with these men that they belonged among the foremost of English writers, and he purposed to preserve in his reminiscences the personal information about them that their admirers would demand when they had come into their own. Unquestionably De Quincey has been of much service in this respect.

The preparation of the collected edition of his works was a titanic task for him. His papers were in horrible confusion- no less than four land-ladies were known at one time to be preserving

a room full of his books and papers, and he suffered from the unscrupulous. His excuses for delays were varied. "Once it was owing to 'lumbago;' once to his having fallen asleep inopportunely; another time to partial delirium from 'want of sleep and opium combined;' another time, to distraction from 'having been up and writing all night,' with the addition 'I have just set fire to my hair.' Once the delay is due to 'a process of white-washing or otherwise cleaning ceilings,&c.,' which has been going on in the house, and the unfortunate fact that most of the papers needed at the moment 'have been placed within a set of drawers against which is now reared the whitewasher's scaffolding.'"[1] He edited carefully, however, revising and even rewriting at times.

His home life possessed many features that lovers of De Quincey should find pleasure in remembering. He was "the gentlest of human beings," he moved about quietly, and won the awe and reverence of his servants. His children grew up "in a kind of wondering regard for their father and his ways, insensibly imbibing refinement from the little atmosphere of high tastes which, with whatever apurtenances of disorder and discomfort, his bookish and studious habits kept around them, and receiving an education of no ordinary kind from his supervision of their lessons and his discursive fireside talk."[2] His son, Julius, aged five, died in 1833; William, his eldest and his pride, in 1835, not quite eighteen; and in 1837 his wife left him. Her daughter said of her: "Delicate health and family cares made her early withdraw from society; but she seems to have had a powerful fascination for the few friends she admitted to her intimacy." After the mother's death, Margaret, yet in her teens, took up her burden,

---

[1] - Masson, page 120.

[2] - Masson, pages 93ff.

and carried it well. The children remained at the country cottage that became their home in 1840, while much of the father's time was spent in Edinburgh, where he again took up his old life in lodging houses.

De Quincey was now a celebrity to be talked about and gossiped over, and his presence was in demand in society, when he could be brought out of his seclusion. That was always a dubious undertaking. When successful, it resulted about as follows: "The festivities of the afternoon are far on when a commotion is heard in the hall as if some dog or other stray animal had forced his way in. The instinct of a friendly guest tells him of the arrival: he opens the door and fetches in the little stranger. What can it be? A street-boy of some sort? His costume, in fact, is a boy's duffle great-coat, very threadbare, with a hole in it, and buttoned tight to the chin, where it meets the fragments of a particolored belcher handkerchief; on his feet are list shoes, covered with snow, for it is a stormy winter night; and the trousers!- some one suggests that they are mere linen garments blackened with writing-ink, but that Papaverius never would have been at the trouble so to disguise them. What can be the theory of such a costume? The simplest thing in the world,- it consisted of the fragments of apparel nearest at hand. Had chance thrown to him a court single-breasted coat, with a bishop's apron, a kilt, and top-boots, in these he would have made his entry."[1] Nevertheless the brilliancy of his conversation repaid the trouble of finding him.

---

[1] - From Mr. Hill-Burton's account. See Masson, page 105. For Professor Masson's own reminiscence of De Quincey see pages 107 and 108.

In 1852 he took up lodgings again at 42 Lothian Street, but continued his walks to Lasswade , and his long peregrinations about the city and neighborhood, especially at night, after his lifelong habit, sleeping many a time under some hedge. His children married and scattered, one of them going to Ireland, where her father visited her in 1857, a momentous journey for the old man. He wrote letters that were delightful to receive, if they managed to escape the mazes of his study-table, and he read every murder report he could get his hands on to the very end. It became apparent in October, 1859, that his frame was worn out, so his youngest daughter, Emily, returned from her Irish visit to be with him, and Mrs. Craig followed in time to be recognised. For the account of his death I quote:[1] "He had been in a doze for some hours; and, as it had been observed that in his waking hours since the beginning of his illness he had reverted much to the incidents of his childhood and talked especially of his father, regretting that he had known so little of him, so in this final doze his mind seemed to be wandering among the same old memories. 'My dear, dear mother: then I was greatly mistaken,' he was heard to murmur; and his very last act was to throw up his arms and utter, as if with a cry of surprised recognition, 'Sister! Sister! Sister!' The vision seemed to be that of his sister Elizabeth, dead near Manchester seventy years before, and now waiting for him on the banks of the river."

He was buried as he lived, in quiet, and likewise he sleeps, alone, and unvisited, in a humble grave. He had gone to Edinburgh an Englishman among the Scotch; an alien he had lived among them; an alien he sleeps among them.

---

[1] - Masson, page 133.

CHAPTER II.

THE PERSONALITY OF DE QUINCEY: HOW MANIFESTED IN HIS ATTITUDE TOWARDS SOCIETY AND TOWARDS PREVAILING INSTITUTIONS[1].

I shall attempt in this chapter to touch upon De Quincey's shyness, his craze for contempt, his love for solitude, his attitude towards nature, his reverence for womanhood, his religious conservatism, and his views on war, poverty, and political institutions.

It seems a very unusual circumstance indeed that emotions aroused at six years of age should dominate an entire life of more than seventy years. Were it not that De Quincey's whole life can be most easily understood by admitting his own theory that his sister's death changed him from that which he might otherwise have been, his emotions of that period would not be granted more than a very brief influence. His mind, in addition to being already quite matured, must have possessed many extraordinary powers and susceptibilities.

Shyness was a marked trait, just as much in manhood as in childhood. "For I was the shyest of children; and, at all stages of life, a natural sense of personal dignity held me back from exposing the least ray of feelings which I was not encouraged <u>wholly</u> to re-

---

1 - I have reserved the opium eating until the third chapter. The importance of De Quincey's relations with Wordsworth and Coleridge have made necessary some attempt at a discussion of his intercourse with them. This will be given in two chapters, immediately following this one. The chapter on Coleridge will include the review of the opium indulgence. Both men were opium eaters, and a study of the vice in one goes hand in hand with an examination of the same vice as the other practised it.

veal." A complete revelation of his mind he probably never gave. This feeling arose largely from sensitiveness, always uppermost in his mind when in the society of even those most intimate with him. Only with children could he be free, and from his love for them, he never lacked their respect and companionship. Especially was he a favorite with the Wordsworth children.

When with Lord Westport in Ireland he expressed his apprehension of intrusion in this phrase: "The intruder, who in fact feels himself in the odd position of a criminal without a crime."[1] In commenting on his entrance to Oxford, he said: "It was not that I had any want of proper boldness for facing the most numerous company of a mixed or ordinary character: reserved, indeed, I was, perhaps even shy,- from the character of my mind, so profoundly medidative, and the character of my life, so profoundly sequestered- but still, from counteracting causes, I was not deficient in a reasonable self-confidence towards the world generally."[2]

De Quincey lacked every trace of the imperative. Peace, liberty to think, solitude; give him these, and he asked nothing more. A scholar he set out to become; and a scholar, retired and impractical, he lived.

He had a perfect craze for contempt, for being despised. As a youth he doted on it and considered it as a luxury that he might lose. "Wherefore should any rational person shrink from contempt, if it happens to form the tenure by which he holds his repose in life?"[3] After childhood passed this emotion was not so conspicuous, yet perhaps never entirely absent. Arising from it came his interest in all the unfortunates whom he discovered, and his kindness to any beggar

---

[1] - Works, i, 212. [2] - Works, ii. 231. [3] - Works, ii, 63.

or street-wanderer. As a corollary to his yearning for contempt existed a morbid sensibility to shame, and the profound melancholy set in that is the frequent result of stomach and liver disorders. At seventeen he drank deep of despair, "my wilful despair and resolute adjuration of all secondary hope."

For the sake of calling attention to one illustration used by De Quincey, it might not be out of place to note his speculative bent. This trait was remarkable, and no more striking illustration can be given than his comparision of the brain with a palimpsest.[1] Or again, how is it possible to accurately estimate his love for the wierd and unusual? His brother Pink's adventures drew a stream of comments on sailors' superstitions, and when given the opportunity to examine the skeleton of a famous robber, De Quincey enjoyed a little heaven of his own.

Not only did he take interest in the superstitions of others, but he had presentiments of his own. "Some dark sympathizing movement, as if echoing and repeating in mimicry the political menaces of the earth, swept with storm-clouds across that otherwise serene and radiant dawn which should have heralded my approaching entrance into life."[2] Or again, when in the vicinity of Grasmere, he had a dim presentiment that he should often pass that way in company not even yet "conjecturally delineated," and that there memories would be planted in his heart that would be the last effaced in the hour of death.[3] With Herbert Cowper he believed that "deep messages of admonition reach an individual through sudden angular deflexions of words, uttered or written, that had not been originally addressed to himself."[4] His visions must be passed over, with mere

---

1 - Works, xii, 340-349. 2 - iii,271. 3 - ii,355.
4 - " iii,138.

reference to that one seen in the church when a boy.[1]

It must not be imagined that De Quincey led an unhappy life. We have his assurance that his days "would present a great overbalance of happiness,"[2] happiness in his days of solitude, derived from intellectual sources. For he was a solitary. "I have passed more of my life in absolute and unmitigated solitude, voluntarily, and for intellectual purposes, than any person of my age whom I have ever met with, heard of, or read of." Though silent as light, it is as light, "the mightiest of agencies," and "essential to man." Perhaps De Quincey was morbidly fond of solitude- he would not deny the probability- but he had chosen solitude from personal necessity. "To reconcentrate them into meditative habits, a necessity is felt by all observing persons for sometimes retreating from crowds. No man ever will unfold the capacities of his own intellect who does not at least checker his life with solitude. How much solitude, so much power. Or, if not true in that vigour of expression, to this formula undoubtedly it is that the wise rule of life must approximate."[3] Take for one chapter of his solitary life his residence at Oxford. Here his habits were "remarkable and unsocial," and he made the well-nigh incredible assertion that during the first two years he "did not utter one hundred words."[4] This statement is probably extreme. If true it cannot be representative, for there is ample proof that De Quincey did at times seek companionship."Every one has times when he wishes for company." So with the solitary opium-eater.

Chiefly in the solitudes of nature, among mountains, forests, and on the shores of lakes, do the memories of the past haunt

---

[1] - Works, i, 49. [2] - x,14. [3] - xiii, 335.
[4] - " ii, 61.

and startle. The luxuries of such memories and such companionships led De Quincey into the realm of the out doors, and bred the love for natural scenery that lured him, even when an old man, out under the nocturnal skies. The earliest emotions, the first deep sensibilities of pathos and the infinite he imbibed from his foster mother. "I felt the passion of grief in a profound degree for the death of a beautiful bird, a kingfisher, which had been taken up in the garden with a fractured wing." The first of the four separate blessings for which he desired to return thanks to Providence was that he "lived in a rustic solitude."

This communion with nature can scarcely be over valued. If for no other reason than the association with Wordsworth's nature love, it should be given attention. But with De Quincey total isolation from any one with kindred feelings, or association with those of opposite temperament, would not have dimmed the glory of the open sky. His was no reflected devotion. Scarcely can we find a parallel, unless among those early woodsmen who roamed the American forests. That comparision brings up a vital distinction between De Quincey and the American woodsman. How helpless De Quincey would have been, entirely out of reach of a civilised cottage. Though many a night he slept under the stars, he "checkered" (it is his own word) his communions with nature with visits to the conveniences of civilisation. He loved variety. From Wales he plunged into London. Crowded city streets became as familiar as rural lanes. Our little De Quincey, in his outlook on the natural world, was as De Quinceyistic as in his outlook on the intellectual world. His writings illustrate his multifariousness in the one sphere; his life, in the other.Thus as a scholar, all conditions of human environment attracted him; his admiration was given to nature.

Take for instance his estimate of an English peasant's environment. "Its Alpine grandeurs, together with the monastic peace which seems to brood over its peculiar form of pastoral life, so much nobler (as Wordsworth notices) in its stern simplicity, and continual conflict with danger hidden in the vast draperies of mist overshadowing the hills, and amongst the armies of snows and hail arrayed by fierce northern winters, than the effeminate shepherd's life in the classical Arcadia, or in the flowery pastures of Sicily."[1] Or admire his description of the arrival of a Swedish spring, or observe his clear-cut comparision between rustic and city poverty, the one staring from broken windows, the other peeping with rosy cheeks from amidst clustering roses and woodbine. Notice that from his earliest days he had "hungered and thirsted" for the mountains, and that, amid the solitudes of Cardiganshire and the wood scenery of Montgomeryshire he "found the most delightful of lives." Again, "Call for the grandest of all earthly spectacles, what is <u>that</u>? It is the sun going to his rest."[2] For two hours would he watch the spectacle of a North Wales sunset.

The night time, even above the day time, had its hallowed thoughts. In many of the Lutheran churches this evening collect is read: "Lighten our darkness, we beseeech Thee, O Lord; and by Thy great mercy defend us from all perils and dangers of this night."[3] This same collect occurs in the Church of England ritual, to which De Quincey gave strict allegiance. Of it he said: "Here again, in his prayer 'Lighten our darkness, we beseech Thee, O Lord!' were the darkness and the great shadows of night made symbolically significant:

---

[1] - Works, iii,283. [2] - iii,292.
[3] - "The Church Book." Philadelphia. (Choir edition). Page 196.

these great powers, Night and Darkness, that belong to aboriginal Chaos, were made representative of the perils that continually menace poor afflicted human nature. With deepest sympathy I accompanied the prayer against the perils of darkness- perils that I seemed to see, in the ambush of midnight solitude, brooding around the beds of sleeping nations; perils from even worse forms of darkness, shrouded within the recesses of blind human hearts; perils from temptations weaving unseen snares for our footing; perils from the limitations of our own misleading knowledge."[1] The night pictures are wonderfully vivid, and replete with that crispness of phrasing which is characteristic of De Quincey at his best. "Sometimes the nights were of that pitchy darkness which is more palpable and unfathomable wherever hills intercept the gleaming of light which otherwise is usually seen to linger about the horizon in the northern quarter; and then arose in perfection that striking effect when the glare of lamps searches for one moment every dark recess of the thickets, forces them into sudden, almost daylight, revelation, only to leave them, within the twinkling of the eye, in darkness more profound; making them like the snow-flakes falling upon a cataract, 'one moment bright, then gone forever.'"[2]

This delicate, gentle little individual enjoyed the winter storms just as keenly as any Canadian. Indeed, "a Canadian winter for my money," where "every man is but a co-partner with the north wind in the fee-simple of h~~o~~is own ears."[3] Like a true son of the out of doors, he could enjoy a winter fire-side.[4]

---

[1] - Works, iii, 292. [2] - Ibid, ii, 356.
[3] - " iii, 408.
[4] - " iii, 407.

Admirable in every way are his pictures of individual scenes from nature. For instance, his picture of the vale of Grasmere from Hammerscar, or this imaginative picture of a pile of stones on one of the mountains in the Lake neighborhood: "The mimic church, however, has a peculiarly fine effect in this wild situation, which leaves so far below the tumults of this world: the phantom church, by suggesting the phantom and evanescent image of a congregation, where never congregation met; of the pealing organ, where never sound was heard except of wild natural notes, or else of the wind rushing through these mighty gates of everlasting rock."[1]

He could descend from such magnificent scenes to describe minute beauties, where beauty is seldom seen. "Cows are amongst the gentlest of breathing creatures; none show more passionate tenderness to their young when deprived of them; and in short, I am not ashamed to profess a deep love for these quiet creatures."[2]

Artificial nature, nature modified by man, he could not tolerate. When viewing a particularly flagrant attempt to improve on rustic wildness, he burst out with the exclaimation: "What a record of human imbecility!"[3] He admitted that nature might be too oppressive "for encouraging a perfectly human interest." Had he found the scenery of Borrowdale too colossal? Perhaps so. Likewise the scenery of the Andes or the Rockies would have appalled him.

Strongly marked also in De Quincey was that new attitude toward woman and womanhood which characterised the Romantic school. The tone of his reminiscences testifies sufficiently to the high

---

1 - Works, ii, 310.
2 - " iii, 305.
3 - " ii, 447.

place he gave woman in his own mind, a regard that he wished universal. Manhood begins when womanhood is no longer a subject of careless regard, when the ideal of womanhood dawns upon the mind.[1] "The names of wife and daughter are the supreme and starry charities of life."[2] One reason given by De Quincey for his unwillingness to attend the Manchester Grammar School was the deprivation from the society of accomplished women.[3] Throughout his life he owed much to the women with whom he came into contact.[4]

It is needless for me to call attention to his condemnation of Byron's attitude towards woman,[5] or to his comments on the general regard for woman throughout England,[6] or to his delight when listening to the laughter of women.[7] I found as well a curious discussion of the place of unmarried women,[8] the tenor of which recalled Stevenson's lines to his aunt,[9] the one individual in application, the other universal. Yet women have their limitations. They are not counterparts of men. They have less imagination than men.[10] They have produced no "Paradise Lost," no "Lear," no "Othello." One thing can woman do. She can die grandly.[11] The world has seen nothing more noble that Madame Roland.[12]

---

1 - Works, i,319. 2 - iii, 177. 3 - iii,258.
4 - For example, his relations with Lady Carberry, Dorothy Wordsworth, and others. 5 - Works, xii, 377. 6 - iv, 47,83 note.
7 - iii,39. 8 - i. 294.
9 -
"Chief of our aunts- not only I,
But all your dozen of nurslings cry-
What did the other children do?
And what were childhood, wanting you?"
From "A Child's Garden of Verses "(1885).
10 - Works, x,440. 11 - See the essay on "Joan of Arc,"vol. v.
12 - For additional references to women, see ii, 300; iv,70-76; viii,401 note; x,144; xi,73,138; xiv,125,357.

Passing now to a new head, De Quincey on the topics of intellectual progress, politics, and education, we find that he was pleased with the progress being made.[1] He made an exception of the writers in political economy, however; "the very dregs and rinsings of the human intellect," he called them.[2] Any man could throttle them with his finger and thumb, who had a sound head, or "bray their fungus heads to powder with a lady's fan."

No paper on De Quincey can be complete unless some mention is made of his prejudice against the modern French. Napoleon was one of his life abominations. This prejudice did not include the older French (the Franks) or Charlemagne. The De Quinceyan contrast between the French and the Franks, between Napoleon and Charlemagne, is notoriously to the disadvantage of the former. He possessed a clearer conception of the French Revolution than any of his romantic contemporaries. He regarded it but as one cycle in a long series of cycles, the final result of which will not be known until long into the future. He had no sympathy with the Reign of Terror, nor for any man who did sympathize with that period of the struggle. Thus the violence which overtook Dr. Priestley for his openly expressed Jacobinism, De Quincey declared to be but the natural result of his folly and misguided passions.[3]

In the political world, De Quincey held to Tory principles, after the fashion of Scott, and with just as much patriotism as he. That greatest of national sentiments should surmount all ordinary distinctions,[4] and when poor and wealthy, the commoner and the peer, are fired by it, each and all stand in the highest rank, by birth right children of England. A patriot himself, he quickly

---

1 - Works, i,322 note. 2 - ix,1. 3- v,118.
4 - xiii,294.

discerned any lack of patriotism in another, and straightway his keen intellect made the most of the fact.[1]

A word concerning his views on education, a subject on which he said comparatively little. He believed in the English public school for boys of nine or ten, where they could be taught conformity to public standards.[2] He found the Oxford method a good one, with many advantages resulting from enforced residence in college halls, and constant control over the students. He remonstrated against corporal punishment. To his mind the best method of school government was that developed by Matthew Davenport Hill, and his even more illustrious son, Rowland Hill.

It has been hinted in a previous connection that De Quincey had somewhat of an aristocratic trend to his nature. So much, indeed, that he argued for a retention of class distinctions, and declared any scheme, such as Dr. Arnold's, to make intercourse between classes less formal, impossible.[3] "Social pleasure is the end and purpose of society."[4] Thus, indecorum against courts and royalty should be frowned upon. Such habits are incompatible with the decorous homage that should always be paid to a king, not as an individual, but as a state creature, representing the majesty of a nation. Hereditary right is "the cheap defense of nations," and to Burke De Quincey gave whole souled praise for his defense of chivalry. If the principle of hereditary succession had been the discovery of any one person, it would deserve to be considered as the very greatest discovery ever made.[5] Between 1640 and 1646 the doctrine of the king's responsibility in the person of his ministers

---

[1] - Works, ii,322. [2] - i,151. [3] - iii,243. [4] - v,55.
[5] - vi,383.

had become perfected. "This doctrine is the main pillar of our Constitution, and perhaps the finest discovery that was ever made in the theory of government."[1] Also this statement, even more reactionary. "And the inviolability of the kingly character in its relations to individuals is a doctrine not merely of the free British constitution, but one which we find more or less developed in all refined countries; and, as civilisation is matured, it will become universal."[2] De Quincey gave the honor of first setting limits to the empire of wrong, of being the first man "to translate within the jurisdiction of man's moral nature that state of war which had heretofore been consigned, by principle no less than by practise to anarchy, animal violence, and brute force," to Marcus Aurelius, who sat upon a throne.[3]

The modern movement to abolish the House of Lords illustrates how far England has traveled since the days of that Tory school to which Scott and De Quincey belonged. Abolish the House of Lords, and the last anchor that keeps England habitable, will be lost; all will be lost.[4] "The House of Lords will not be reformed on this side of a civil war."[5]

Then society must recognize a scheme of happiness, a code of manners for the higher classes, of morals for the middle classes. The necessaries of life may be reduced, but the circumstances of elegance and of propriety must be maintained.[6] And universal suffrage would be the ruin of England; indeed, it would dissolve any large community.[7]

---

[1] - Works, ix, 296. [2] - viii,3. [3] - vi,345.
[4] - iv,396. [5] - ix,357. [6] - i,19,20. [7] - ix.393.

De Quincey, on the subject of war, put forward several doctrines, startling when viewed in the light of our present advanced opinions on the subject. In De Quincey's time, but dating particularly to the days of Kant and Cowper, there had begun to be a reaction against war. It began to be felt that war was contrary (a) to Christianity, by the havoc it creats among those possessing God's image,[1] (b) to Political Economy, because of its destruction of property and of human labor, and (c) to rational logic, because oftentimes its pretexts had proved absurd. It frequently occurs that the wrong, over which the war is ostensibly raised, is not of a nature to be thus redressed, or the original wrong is forgotten in the progress of the conflict. Again, war prevents another course of redressing wrong, viz. "temperate negotiation, or neutral arbitration."[2] These things were always true; "they are now felt to be true." Yet, "shall I offend the reader by doubting, after all, whether war is not an evil still destined to survive through several centuries? Great progress has already been made. In the two leading nations of the earth war can no longer be made with the levity which provoked Cowper's words two generations back. France is too ready to fight for mere bubbles of what she calls glory. But neither in France nor England could a war now be undertaken without a warrant from the popular voice. This is a great step in advance; but the final step for its extinction will be taken by a new and Christian code of international law. This cannot be consummated until Christian philosophy shall have traversed the earth and reorganized the structure of society." International arbitration is

---

[1] - Works, viii,233. [2] - viii,234.

realising the final stage which De Quincey prophesied, but even to-day Christian philosophy has not yet attained influence necessary to utterly banish war. War is the natural state of things, except for those who, by right of family or neighborhood, band together, whilst peace must be proclaimed. Thus, in the beginnings of society, war had, perhaps, a necessity. But even with civilised nations, a war on a national scale may be, and has often been, ennobling, and a great instrument in the spread of civilisation. But private war can never be otherwise that demoralising. There is a twofold necessity for war, (a) " a physical necessity, arising out of man's nature when combined with man's situation," and (b) "a moral necessity connected with benefits of compensation, such as continually lurk in evils acknowledged to be such- a necessity under which it becomes lawful to say that war ought to exist, as a balance to opposite tendencies of a still more evil character. War is the mother of wrong and spoliation: granted; but, like other scourges in the divine economy, war purifies and redeems itself when viewed as a counterforce to greater evils that could not otherwise be intercepted or redressed." Every nation's duty, "first, midst, and last," is to itself. If war be banished as it now exists, it will return in a worse shape, as predatory and ruffian war, without privilege or sufferance, uncurbed by law. It was a great truth which Wordsworth uttered, when he said

"God's most perfect instrument
In working out a pure intent
Is man arrayed for mutual slaughter;
Yea, Carnage is His daughter."

"There is a mystery in approaching this aspect of the case which no man has read fully. War has a deeper and more ineffable relation to hidden grandeurs in man than has yet been deciphered. To execute judgments of retribution upon outrages offered to human rights or to human dignity, to vindicate the sanctities of the altar and the sanctities of the hearth: these are functions of human greatness which war has many times assumed, and many times faithfully discharged. But, behind all these, there towers, dimly a greater. The great phenomenon of war it is, this and this only, which keeps open in man a spiracle- an organ of respiration- for breathing a transcendent atmosphere, and dealing with an idea that else would perish: viz. the idea of mixed crusade and martyrdom, doing and suffering, that finds its realization in a battle such as that of Waterloo- viz. a battle fought for interests of the human <u>race</u>, felt even where they are not understood;so that the tutelary Angel of Man, when he traverses such a dreadful field, when he reads the distorted features, counts the ghastly ruins, sums the hidden anguish, and the harvests

'Of horror breathing from the silent ground,'

nevertheless, speaking as God's messenger, 'blesses it, and calls it very good.'"[1]

On the subject of poverty, De Quincey argued that before the time of Christianity, no charitable or beneficent institutions based on disinterested kindness, existed. It was Coleridge who advanced the doctrine that the Bible contains all genuine and profound statesmanship. This is one of the Biblical political

---

1 - Works, viii, 369.

theories: "that pauperism is not an accident in the constitution of states, but an indefeasible necessity; or, in the Scriptural words, that 'the poor shall never cease out of the land.'" This principle passed for a truism for centuries, until Christianity called it into new life. Eventually it awakened into a controversial life. "People arose who took it upon them utterly to deny the Scriptural doctrine. Peremptorily they challenged the assertion that poverty must always exist. The Bible said that it was an affection of human society which could not be exterminated; the economist of 1800 said that it was a foul disease which must and should be exterminated. The Scriptural philosophy said that pauperism was inalienable from man's social condition, in the same way that decay was inalienable from the flesh. 'I shall soon see that,' said the economist of 1800;'for as sure as my name is Malthus, I will have this poverty put down by law within one generation, if there's a law to be had in the courts of Westminster.'"

Throughout his life De Quincey mantained deep admiration for the Episcopal communion. He declared that every man, from his mother's influence, obtains some sort of religious beliefs, and any contrary assertion means simply weakness of mind on the subject. The first essential is belief in the Scriptures. The mention of the Bible brings up a series of topics, one of these having to do with the relations between science and the Bible. "It is an obligation resting upon the Bible, if it is to be consistent with itself, that it should refuse to teach science; and, if the Bible had ever taught any one art, science, or process of life, capital doubts would have clouded our confidence in the authority of the book.

THE BIBLE MUST NOT TEACH ANYTHING THAT MAN CAN TEACH HIMSELF. Does a doctrine require a revelation?- then nobody but God can teach it. Does it require none?- then in whatsoever case God has qualified man to do a thing for himself, he has in that very qualification silently laid an injunction upon man to do it."[1]

Christianity has been the one great organ of political movement. [2] Immanuel Kant hated pure Christianity, and found the Catholic church to be more consistent than the Protestant church, because it avows salvation only within its own pale; while the Protestant church admits salvation as perhaps possible for the Catholic. De Quincey, commenting on this, remarked that this would give the preference to the Catholic church, "since, after all, to be happier than happy is what no man need desire." De Quincey admired toleration, but of Kant he said: "It may be hoped that a time will never come, in any Christian land, when a public professor in a great national university, authorised and protected by the government,- a professor, too, whose extraordinary talents and knowledge diffuses his opinions far and wide, and whose otherwise irreproachable life gives them additional weight and influence,- can have reason to count upon toleration in sapping the very foundations of those doctrines upon which all the sublimer hopes of poor frail humanity repose. Such a time, we trust, will never come even in the heart of infidel Germany."[3]

---

1 - Works, viii, 282.
2 - " viii, 207 - 243.
3 - " viii, 102.

CHAPTER III.

DE QUINCEY'S OPIUM-EATING, HIS DREAMS, AND HIS RELATIONS WITH SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE.

The present chapter will treat of the opium-eating, the dreams to which De Quincey was subject, and his relations with Samuel Taylor Coleridge. This somewhat peculiar grouping is adopted, first, for the reason that much of his dreaming arose from the effects of opium indulgence, and secondly, for the reason that Coleridge also was an opium eater, and this and other characteristics the two men had in common.

De Quincey first took opium in 1804.[1] Up to this time he had heard of it only as he "had heard of manna or of ambrosia." It was during his second year at Oxford, and while on a visit to London. While in the city a severe attack of neuralgia caused him great agony, until he walked the streets in his efforts to find relief. A college friend advised opium, and after ten days of suffering, he secured some of it from a druggist in Oxford Street. He bought it simply as an anodyne when under the severest torture. De Quincey carefully stated that had it not been for his stomach disorder he would not have become addicted to the habit. Medical opinion would seem to substantiate this statement.[2] He was subject to a malady, brought on by the irregularity of his diet during his

---

[1] - Works, iii, 209-449, especially 379.
[2] - Japp's biography. Appendix.

wanderings in Wales and his first sojourn in London. The disorder manifested its action in a painful ulceration of the lining of the stomach. It first became annoying when De Quincey was in the house of the man Brunnel; he mentioned the difficulty of sleeping because of the "twitching." To his delight he found that his first indulgence in opium relieved this pain, and for this reason he encouraged himself in the habit.

His indulgences from 1804 to 1812 did not have any effect on his health that he could discern. In 1812 he was never better in his life, though by that year he had consumed a vast quantity of the drug. Indeed, he went further than the mere denial of any pernicious result. He would insist that opium saved him from premature death. In youth he possessed all the indications of consumption, and he had felt that his friends and physicians had expected nothing else than an early termination to his career. He found that opium exercises a most beneficial result in cases of consumption, through the minute but profuse perspiration which it arouses.

From his own experiences with a frail constitution De Quincey learned to deeply respect sound health and a sound body. "In general, a man has reason to think himself well off in the great lottery of this life if he draws the prize of a healthy stomach without a mind, or the prize of a fine intellect with a crazy stomach, but that any man should draw both is astonishing, and I suppose, happens only once in a century."[1] He probably envied those more fortunate than he in this respect, but it was an envy mixed with a whole hearted admiration. "Unfluctuating health," the "priceless blessing" he knew not, won from him several of those delightful

---

1 - Works, x,16.

little digressive paragraphs that lie strewn throughout his multifarious essays.

During his second residence in London he would take his dose of opium, and then wander about the little known streets of the city, threading the intricate mazes of the London streets with absolute fearlessness, penetrating the scenes of most abject poverty, and the streets haunted of vice and crime, with perfect equanimity. Couple with this the fact that these peregrinations were like as not nocturnal, and we have a very good testimonial to one phase of romanticism in his make-up. Or again, he would attend the opera, especially to hear Grassini sing, for De Quincey had an extremely keen ear and appreciation for music.

After his first period of years untouched by evil effects came his period of opium horrors, of wild dreams, and of clouded mental functions, "the years in which circumstances made me an Opium Eater, years through which a shadow as of sad eclipse sat and rested upon my faculties; years through which I was careless of all but those who lived within my inner circle, within 'my heart of hearts;' years- ah! heavenly years- through which I lived, beloved, <u>with</u> thee, <u>to</u> thee, <u>for</u> thee, <u>by</u> thee!"[1]

He made three attempts to leave off opium: at the time of his marriage; in the year 1821; and again in 1844. In his appendix to the first edition of the "Confessions"[2] he recorded the results of his attempt of the previous year. He had been allowing himself from 170 to 180 drops of laudanum a day for a long period, with an occasional increase to five hundred drops, and once to nearly seven hundred drops. He began his attempt at reform by a reduction

---

[1] - Works, ii,339.

[2] - In 1822.

to eighty drops. Great suffering resulted, but he persisted. A month later he went for a half week without touching opium, but with much increased sufferings. Two of the physical results of this reduction appear striking, (a) the swelling and ulceration of his lower jaw, with an ulcerated mouth and "inability to sleep more than three hours out of twenty-four;" (b) for the first time since his indulgences in opium, he suffered from a cold and severe cough. Later in his life he took as much as eight thousand drops in a day. His chief crisis was in 1844, and though he made slight resistance in 1848, he had practically given up the struggle four years earlier. From 1848 he took the minimum amount on which existence was endurable. By this date medical authorities had diagnosed his main malady as "gastrodynia," or gastric neuralgia, and he could no longer receive ordinary nourishment, but subsisted on soups, tea, coffee, and other liquids, with bread, and perhaps a bit of meat well done and cut into minute particles so that he could masticate it. His teeth had long been gone. In 1847 he wrote to a friend that he had not once dined "since shaking hands with him in the eighteenth century."[1]

His dreams are more impressive when reported in his own words. Thus I apologize for the quotations which follow. As the dreaming faculty was carried to its greatest height under the stimulus of opium, the first step must be an approach to those conditions into which opium requires that a man place himself who desires to test its efficacy in creating a dream-world. "In that state (i.e.,under the deepest influence of opium) crowds become an oppression to him; music even too sensual and gross. He naturally seeks solitude and silence, as indispensable conditions of those

---

[1] - Masson's biography, page 100.

trances or profoundest reveries, which are the crown and consumnation of what opium can do for human nature. I , whose disease it was to meditate too much and to observe too little, and who, upon my first entrance at college, was nearly falling into a deep melancholy, from brooding too much on the sufferings which I had witnessed in London, was sufficiently aware of these tendencies in my own thoughts to do all I could to counteract them."[1]

In speaking of the shadowy power that opium had over him, De Quincey said: "Habitually I lived under such an impression of awe as we have felt from stories of fawns, or seeming fawns, that have run before some mounted hunter for many a league, until they have tempted him far into the mazes of a boundless forest, and at that point, when all regress has become lost and impossible, either suddenly vanished leaving the man utterly bewildered, or assumed some more fearful shape."[2]

In a recent book by Harold Begbie, entitled "Twice-Born Men,"[3] the reasonable theory is advanced that men take to drink for the sake of the new world opened to them in their state of intoxication; for men of the type Mr. Begbie considers this is probably the only refuge from the sordidness of daily existence. From the very first De Quincey recognised that he had in opium a power that would open to him new heights of sublimity to which his unaided imagination could not aspire. Whether this fact was not of equal importance with his physical demands in making him a confirmed opium-eater is a fair question. Of the scenes which opened to him, he said: "A theatre seemed suddenly opened and lighted up within my brain, which presented nightly spectacles of more than earthly

---

[1] - Works, iii,394.
[2] - " " 416.
[3] -- Fleming H Revell Co.

splendor." And let us observe too the annihilation of space and time. "Space swelled, and was amplified to an extent of unutterable and self-repeating infinity."[1]

De Quincey spent much time in approaching the opium problem from a philosophical basis, and naturally, in the same connection, the more conventional modes of securing mental exhilaration. He observed the immediate descent from the apex to which the drunkard rises, when that apex is reached, and comments on intoxication from green tea or beefsteak.[2] The pleasure from opium when once generated "is stationary for eight or ten hours." Wine brings out the animal nature; on the contrary opium causes "a healthy restoration to that state which the mind would naturally recover upon the removal of any deep-seated irritation from pain that had disturbed and quarreled with the impulses of a heart originally just and good." The allegation that the natural and immediate consequence of opium is torpor and stagnation, animal as well as mental, results from misunderstanding. In fact opium exercises so contrary an effect (immediate) that De Quincey would have us believe it to be efficacious in cases of near-death. This in regard to the immediate effect only; opium worked on De Quincey quite different results after a time, and from his experiences, and those of Coleridge, it is plainly apparent that continued use of opium is fatal to mental activity.

So many threads entered into De Quincey's dream fabrics that the problem of dealing with them with any degree of conciseness is most difficult. Hence there can be mention of but one or two of these threads. A tendency to revery was innate in De Quincey. "My

---

1 - Works, iii,434.
2 - " " 383 etc.

constitutional infirmity of mind ran but too determinately towards the sleep of endless reverie, and of dreamy abstraction from life and its realities."[1] This was one phase of the ecstatic (I admit the inadequacy of the term) in his make-up. Of this attempt to reach beyond the commonplace he gave this comment on improvisations: "To autoschediaz, or improvise, is sometimes in effect to be forced into a consciousness of creative energies that would else have slumbered through life. The same stimulation to the creative faculty occurs, even more notoriously in musical improvisations; and all great executants on the organ have had reason to bemoan their inability to arrest those sudden felicities of impassioned combinations and those flying arabesques of loveliest melody which the magnetic inspiration of the moment has availed to excite."[2]

Thus dreaming is important, and deserves cultivation. "The machinery for dreaming planted in the human brain was not planted for nothing. That faculty, in alliance with the mystery of darkness, is the one great tube through which man communicates with the shadowy."[3]

Four characteristics of De Quincey's opium dreams assist in the appreciation of them. First, that there came to be a connection between the waking and dreaming states of the brain at one point, and that the calling up voluntarily of images in the darkness transferred itself to dreams "drawn out into insufferable splendor." Secondly, that changes in the dreams were accompanied by deep-seated anxiety and funereal melancholy. "I seemed every night to descend- not metaphorically, but literally to descend- into chasms and sunless abysses, depths below depths, from which it seemed hopeless that I

---

[1] - Works, iii,242. [2] - v,307. [3] - xiii,335.

could ever ascend." Third, that the sense of space and time was affected. Fourth, that the minutest incidents of childhood and early life were revived.

An early dream of a crowd of ladies, sometimes dancing, he associated with the times of Charles I. His early dreams were chiefly architectural, of great pomps of cities and palaces. Later came dreams of lakes and water, which gradually changed until they became seas and oceans, and the human face intruded itself. "The sea appeared paved with innumerable faces, upturned to the heavens; faces, imploring, wrathful, despairing; faces that surged upwards by thousands, by myriads, by generations; infinite was my agitation; my mind moved, as it seemed, upon the billowy ocean, and weltered upon the weltering waves."[1] Then succeeded the most fearful oriental dreams, of all sorts of tropical animals crowded into China and Hindostan. "I was stared at, hooted at, grinned at, chattered at, by monkeys, by paroquets, by cockatoos. I ran into pagodas, and was fixed for centuries at the summit, or in secret rooms; I was the idol; I was the priest; I was worshipped; I was sacrificed. I fled from the wrath of Brama through all the forests of Asia; Vishnu hated me; Seeva lay in wait for me. I came suddenly upon Isis and Osiris: I had done a deed, they said, which the ibis and the crocodile trembled at. Thousands of years I lived and was buried in stone coffins, with mummies and sphinxes, in narrow chambers at the heart of eternal pyramids. I was kissed, with cancerous kisses, by crocodiles, and was laid, confounded with all unutterable abortions, amongst reeds and Nilotic mud."

---

1 - Works, iii, 441.

And finally came this dream which never left him, although often it came with fantastic variations:

"I thought that it was a Sunday morning in May; that it was Easter Sunday, and as yet very early in the morning. I was standing, as it seemed to me, at the door of my own cottage. Right before me lay the very scene which could really be commanded from that situation, but exalted, as was usual, and solemnised by the power of dreams. There were the same mountains, and the same lovely valley at their feet; but the mountains were raised to more than Alpine height, and there were interspaces far larger between them of savannahs and forest lawns; the hedges were rich with white roses; and no living creature was to be seen, excepting that in the green churchyard there were cattle tranquilly reposing upon the verdant graves;,and particularly round about the grave of a child whom I had once tenderly loved, just as I had really beheld them, a little before sunrise, in the same summer when that child died. I gazed upon the well-known scene, and I said to myself, 'It yet wants much of sunrise; and it is Easter Sunday; and that is the day on which they celebrate the first-fruits of Resurrection. I will walk abroad; old griefs shall be forgotten to-day; for the air is cool and still, and the hills are high, and stretch away to heaven; and the churchyard is as verdant as the forest lawns, and the forest lawns are as quiet as the churchyard; and with the dew I can wash the fever from my forehead; and then I shall be unhappy no longer.' I turned, as if to open my garden gate, and immediately I saw upon the left a scene far different; but which yet the power of dreams had reconciled into harmony. The scene was an oriental one; and there also it was Easter Sunday, and very early in the morning. And at a

vast distance were visible, as a stain upon the horizon, the domes and cupolas of a great city- an image or faint abstraction, caught perhaps from childhood from some picture of Jerusalem. And not a bow-shot from me, upon a stone, shaded by Judean palms,there sat a woman; and I looked, and it was - Ann! She fixed her eyes upon me earnestly; and I said to her at length,'So,then,I have found you at last.' I waited; but she answered me not a word. Her face was the same as when I saw it last; the same, and yet, again, how different! Seventeen years ago, when the lamp-light of mighty London fell upon her face, as for the last time I kissed her lips (lips,Ann, that to me were not polluted!), her eyes were streaming with tears. The tears were now no longer seen. Sometimes she seemed altered; yet again sometimes <u>not</u> altered; and hardly older. Her looks were tranquil, but with unusual solemnity of expression, and I now gazed upon her with some awe. Suddenly her countenance grew dim; and, turning to the mountains, I perceived vapors rolling between us; in a moment all had vanished; thick darkness came on; and in the twinkling of an eye I was far away from mountains, and by lamp-light in London, walking again with Ann- just as we had walked,when both children, eighteen years before,along the endless terraces of Oxford Street.

"Then suddenly would come a dream of far different character- a tumultuous dream- commencing with a music such as now I often heard in sleep- music of preparation and of awakening suspense. The undulations of fast-gathering tumults were like the opening of the Coronation Anthem; and, like <u>that</u>, gave the feeling of a multitudinous movement, of infinite cavalcades filing off, and the tread of innumerable armies. The morning was come of a mighty

day- a day of crisis and of ultimate hope for human nature, then suffering mysterious eclipse, and laboring in some dread extremity. Somewhere, but I knew not where- somehow, but I knew not how- by some beings, but I knew not by whom- a battle, a strife, an agony, was travelling through all its stages- was evolving itself, like the catastrophe of some mighty drama, with which my sympathy was the more insupportable from deepening confusion as to its local scene, its cause, its nature, and its undecipherable issue. I (as usual in dreams where, of necessity, we make ourselves central to every movement) had the power, and yet had not the power, to decide it. I had the power, if I could raise myself to will it; and yet again had not the power, for the weight of twenty Atlantics was upon me, or the oppression of inexpiable guilt. 'Deeper than ever plummet sounded,' I lay inactive. Then, like a chorus, the passion deepened. Some greater interest was at stake, some mightier cause, than ever yet the sword had pleaded, or trumpet had proclaimed. Then came sudden alarms; hurryings to and fro; trepidations of innumerable fugitives, I knew not whether from the good cause or the bad; darkness and lights; tempest and human faces; and at last, with the sense that all was lost, female forms, and the features that were worth all the world to me; and but a moment allowed- and clasped hands, with heart-breaking partings, and then- everlasting farewells! and, with a sigh such as the caves of hell sighed when the incestuous mother uttered the abhorred name of Death, the sound was reverberated- everlasting farewells! and again, and yet again reverberated, everlasting farewells!

"And I awoke in struggles, and cried aloud, 'I will sleep no more!'"

Quite naturally De Quincey endeavored to introduce all the evidence favorable to opium that he could muster. Thus he insisted that a very surprising proportion of humanity have derived comfort and pleasure from the drug.[1] Dean Isaac Milner, for instance, ruined his own activities from eating opium, but from physical necessity.[2] Dryden did not use opium, but substituted raw meat, that he might have splendid dreams.[3] William Wilberforce and Lord Erskine used it; even ancient Homer may be viewed with suspicion. What secret power exists in the drug that caused such men to risk their reputation by indulgence in a secret habit? The answer comes in De Quincey's declaration of his purpose in writing the "Confessions." His purpose was, he said, "to emblazon the power of opium, not over bodily disease and pain, but over the grander and more shadowy world of dreams."[4]

After the "Confessions" had appeared, Coleridge wrote in a letter: "Oh! may He, the God to whom I look for mercy through Christ, shew mercy on the author of the Confessions of an Opium Eater, if, as I have strong reason to believe, his book has been the occasion of seducing others into the withering vice, through wantonness. From this aggravation, I have, I humbly trust, been free. Even to the author of that work I pleaded with flowing tears, and with an agony of forewarning. He utterly denied it; but I fear that I had even then to deter perhaps, not to forewarn."[5] Coleridge was even more deeply emmeshed in the opium habit than De Quincey.[6] He had given De Quincey warning, and had urged him to leave the

---

[1] - Works, iii,211. [2] - v,24. [3] - iii,440. [4] - iii,215.
[5] - " iii,224. [6] - ii,184,189,211; iii,74,224-231;v,205-211.

terrible poison alone. De Quincey, however, did not believe that Coleridge could judge the effects of opium accurately, for the reason that he falsely believed that he had nearly accomplished his own liberation from the habit. Coleridge far exceeded De Quincey in quantity of opium consumed, if De Quincey's account is to be accepted. When he indulged in eight thousand drops, Coleridge took regularly double that amount, and it is known from other sources that many times Coleridge did not stop short of a quart of laudanum in twenty four hours.

This excessive indulgence had much the same effects as De Quincey discovered from his experimenting. Undoubtedly Coleridge's morbid feelings, debility, and remorse came directly from this source. The result is well illustrated by the failure of his lectures before the Royal Institution, not only from unfit condition when on the platform, but as well from frequent inability to appear at all. To opium Coleridge owed "all these wandering and exaggerated estimates of men, these diseased impulses, that, like the mirage, showed lakes and fountains where in reality there were only deserts."[1] In return opium killed Coleridge as a poet. "'The harp of Quantock' was silenced forever by the torment of opium." Poetry can flourish only in the atmosphere of happiness.

"For not to think of what I needs must feel,
   But to be still and patient all I can,
   And haply by abstruse research to steal
   From my own nature all the natural man-
   This was my sole resource, my only plan:
Till that which suits a part infects the whole
And now is almost grown the habit of my soul.'"[2]

---

[1] - Works, v,199.
[2] - Quoted on v,207.

De Quincey stood at all times in the foremost rank among the admirers of Coleridge.[1] During his first visit to Lamb he very nearly insulted his host, who took occasion to ridicule "The Ancient Mariner." De Quincey retaliated by raising both hands to both ears in an endeavor to restore his equanimity by shutting out all further knowledge of Lamb's "impiety."[2] It will be recollected that De Quincey became acquainted with Lamb as a friend of Coleridge.

De Quincey first met Coleridge in August, 1807, at Bridgewater. The "Lyrical Ballads" had already done De Quincey valuable service during his Oxford residence; they saved him from depression and melancholy. "It would be directing the reader's attention too much to myself if I were to linger upon this, the greatest event in the unfolding of my own mind. Let me say, in one word, that, at a period when neither the one nor the other writer was valued by the public- both having a long warfare to accomplish of contumely and ridicule before they could rise into their present estimation- I found in these poems 'the ray of a new morning,' and an absolute revelation of untrodden worlds teeming with power and beauty as yet unsuspected amongst men."[3] It might be worth while to mention that John Wilson received this same impression at about the same time.

On every possible occasion De Quincey rendered Coleridge service, once by the loan of three hundred pounds, and while resident at Grasmere, by giving him free access to his excellent library. Coleridge would have several hundred volumes withdrawn at

---

[1] - Works, iii,227. [2] - iii,43. [3] - ii,138.

a time, and in order to prevent their loss, he would write in De Quincey's name, adding "Esquire," which De Quincey many years after took great pains to erase.[1]

De Quincey considered "The Friend," in its original publication, as a pecuniary speculation, the least judicous he had ever known. He also regretted Coleridge's marked habit of plagiarism, for Coleridge never hesitated to filch from any man. "Continually he fancied other men's thoughts his own; but such were the confusions of his memory that continually and with even greater liberality, he ascribed his own thoughts to others."[2]

De Quincey also found fault with his habit of procrastination, especially as regarded letters, for very frequently Coleridge never read his mail. However De Quincey himself lived in a glass house, and had far better left this comment unsaid. Between the pair in this respect there was little to choose. On one of De Quincey's comments, however, there is food for reflection. The matrimonial experiences of all the Lakists were ideal (so far as that end lay within the reach of mutual affection) save for one exception- Coleridge. On this fact De Quincey remarked that he believed it impossible for either Coleridge or Lord Byron not eventually to have quarreled with any wife, "though a Pandora send down from heaven to bless him."

The influence of "The Ancient Mariner" depends on the mood of the reader. If a gross reader, or one who sees the imagery as merely the result of delirium, the effect is lost.[3] In actuality, the result came from penitential sorrow, which De Quincey himself could surely appreciate. Coleridge's mind was by

---

[1] - Japp's biography, page 115. [2] - Works, ii,228.
[3] - xiii,195.

nature logical. Logic was "as inalienable from his mood of thinking as grammar from his language." Yet it is to be regretted that his powers were never forced out by persecuting opposition, the final schooling which his nature required.[1]

In conversational ability the two men were equally marvellous, yet widely separate in their style of colloquy. De Quincey shunned as he "would shun a pestilence" Coleridge's habit of doing all the talking himself. He was not much in demand because of this failing; his powers were adapted only to small parties. However "a felicitous conversational specimen from him was sometimes the most memorable chapter in a man's whole intellectual experience through life."[2] And of his customary procedure De Quincey told that in one instance he had talked for about three hours, " in the course of the performance he had delivered many most striking aphorisms, embalming more weight of truth, and separately more deserving to be themselves embalmed than would easily be found in a month's course of select reading."[3]

In closing this brief glance at these two men in their relations one to the other, it will be worth while to consider one or two De Quinceyistic views of Coleridge's place in politics and social reform. De Quincey observed Coleridge's first passionate sympathy with the French Revolution, and how he had found reason to deprecate it as it was carried on by zealots, but yet continued to

---

1 - De Quincey's own opinion.
2 - Works, iii, 18,19.
3 - " ii, 157.

worship the original revolutionary cause "in a pure Miltonic spirit," and to abominate the policy of Pitt, which thing De Quincey could not understand.[1] However Coleridge was a sagacious political prophet, and anticipated the restoration of the Bourbons. Also was he a friend of reform, especially in Parliament. He acknowledged the right of the people to a large influence in politics. Though "in any eminent sense he was not a patriot." That is, unlike De Quincey, the glory of his own nation and her triumphs had no appeal for him. The majesty of Waterloo, which to De Quincey had an almost supernatural significance, meant but little to Coleridge. In this respect he was the truer romanticist, having more nearly the romantic conception of universal brotherhood than had De Quincey.

---

1 - Works, ii, 169,etc.

CHAPTER IV.

WORDSWORTH: DE QUINCEY'S RELATIONS WITH HIM; HIS CRITICAL OPINION OF HIM.

Sufficient evidence of Wordsworth's influence over De Quincey is furnished by the many allusions, references, and quotations scattered in prodigal profusion throughout De Quincey's writings. To Wordsworth, more than to any other individual, was De Quincey indebted. But in examining this indebtedness, we must separate De Quincey's estimate of his master's intellectual genius from his opinion of him as an individual. Here we touch a striking De Quinceyism. A more orthodox man, as regarded questions of religion and morality there never existed. Romantic doctrines of freedom in these spheres he repudiated; thus Burns and Byron failed to secure his admiration because of their heterodoxy. The Wordsworthian influence came through his poems before De Quincey had met the man, and through the poems he formed his mental picture of the poet. This early influence went too deep to be erased, but after a long acquaintance with the man, De Quincey wrote these words as advice to those about to become hero-worshippers. "Gaze on the splendor of such idols as a passing stranger. Look for a moment as one sharing in the idolatry; but pass on before the splendor has been sullied by human frailty, or before your own generous admiration has been confounded with offerings of weeds, or with the homage of the sycophant."[1] For men of axtraordinary genius should be looked at from a distance and not made daily companions[2]

---

[1] - Works, xi,295. [2] - iii,197.

In 1799 (at the age of fourteen) De Quincey had read "We Are Seven." In 1801-2 he read "Ruth." He had written to Wordsworth and received a long reply by May of 1803, a letter that kept him awake for a whole night from excess of pleasure. His veneration for Wordsworth "transcended all that I ever felt for any created being, past or present,"[1] and the image of Wordsworth, as De Quincey prefigured it, crushed his faculties as if it had been Elijah or Saint Paul.[2] He hesitated to approach him in person. He first met Wordsworth in 1807, and then almost by accident. His sensations were overwhelming. "Never before or since can I reproach myself with having trembled at the approaching presence of any creature that is born of woman, excepting only, for once or twice in my life, woman herself."[3]

This enthusiasm came not from mere interest in the author as an individual, but from the recognition that a rebirth of poetry was manifesting itself through Wordsworth's stanzas. By 1801 he had already recognized this grand renovation, when, as he said, he was contrasting "the little artificial usages of petty traditional knack with the natural forms of a divine art- the difference being pretty much as between an American lake, Ontario, or Superior, and a carp pond or a tench preserve."[4] Thus De Quincey approached Wordsworth, believing him to be the embodiment of the new era. In his college days Wordsworth had helped to unfold his mind; so now his first introduction to the poet marked another epoch. "That night- the first of my personal intercourse with Wordsworth- was marked by a change even in the physical condition of my nervous system. Long disappointment- hope for ever baffled . . vexation and self-

---

[1] - Works, iii,36. [2] - ii,231. [3] - Japp's biography,page 92.
[4] - ii,129.

blame . . at my own want of courage to face the man whom of all since the Flood I most yearned to behold:- these feelings had impressed upon my nervous sensibilities a character of irritation - agitation - restlessness - eternal self-dissatisfaction- that would have shaped itself into some nervous complaint."[1]

And yet this ardent disciple became estranged from his master. The relations which blossomed so auspiciously, cooled. From the very first De Quincey had perplexed himself over Wordsworth's ridicule of many books which he regarded profoundly. One of these, Schiller's "Wallenstein," De Quincey particularly admired for the exquisite sketch of Max and Thekla, a beauty that did not exist for Wordsworth. De Quincey accused Wordsworth of having never read one page from Scott, and of laughing at Ann Radcliffe. Instead Wordsworth delighted in Smollett, Fielding, and Le Sage, "disgusting by their moral scenery and the whole state of vicious society in which they keep the reader moving."[2]

Wordsworth had come of a somewhat "romantic" family. His brother Richard, after success in London, went back to the rural scenes of his childhood.[3] The minuteness of De Quincey's attention to such details is of some significance. It reveals true sympathy with his topic, a true effort to understand every Wordsworthian motive. He observed the family characteristic of showing age;[4] the distance (he calculated it to be 175,000 to 180,000 English miles) that Wordsworth had traveled in his walking excursions; at Cambridge Wordsworth had played the "dandy," dressed in silk stockings , with powdered hair, in marked contrast to his later slovenly habits; his

---

1 - Works, ii, 303. 2 - iii,206. 3 - ii, 206.
3 - ii,256. 4 - ii,241.

household furniture was of the simplest, and his kitchen humble, such simplicity as De Quincey there met for the first time in his own rather aristocratic youth.[1] After a long walk the Wordsworthian eyes would assume "the most solemn and spiritual(appearance) that it is possible for the human eyes to wear."[2] And during one period of his life Wordsworth had been haunted by the fear of poverty.[3] "He could not be betrayed into foolish engagements; he could not be betrayed into expensive habits. Profusion and extravagance had no hold over him, by any one passion or taste. He was not luxurious in anything. Very few books sufficed him: he was careless habitually of all the current literature that could not be considered as enshrining the very ideal, capital, and elementary grandeur of the human intellect."[4] Southey was a man of books, collector of a notable library: Wordsworth's books were notorious for their paucity and shabbiness. Coleridge inserted the most valuable marginal notes: while any attempt of Wordsworth's in this direction turned out to be merest foolishness and commonplaces.[5]

Wordsworth was a favored man. All through his life can incidents be seen which resulted in "insulating from worldly cares and carrying onward from childhood to the grave, in a state of serene happiness, one who was unfitted for daily toil, and, at all events, who could not, under such demands upon his time and anxieties, have prosecuted those genial labors in which all mankind have an interest."[6] His poetry contains much of the autobiographical. The imaginary Scotsman, for instance, in the "Excursion," who, to calm his mind when watching a cataract, would study the laws of light and color as reflected in the water, we may accept as a picture of Wordsworth in

---

[1] - Works, ii,306. [2] - ii,245. [3] - ii,286. [4] - ii,287.
[5] - ii,312. [6] - ii,252.

his own youth. To De Quincey his appearance remarkably resembled Richardson's portrait of Milton.[1] His whole life was blessed with the amplest leisure that ever man enjoyed. He had perfect liberty to pursue his intellectual delights, in the very best conditions- culture, leisure,[2] ease, solitude, domestic peace,- that could possibly have existed for him. In short, a more fortunate man never existed.[3]

What, then, were the flaws which alienated the careful disciple? The difficulty arose simply from Wordsworth's austereness. As a boy he could not have been amiable. He was austere and unsocial in his habits, not self-denying. He required absolute personal freedom.[4] Like his own pedlar in the "Excursion," he had become so diffused amongst innumerable attractions that he had no heart for individual attachments. This was no valueless scattering of his pursuits. For thus he was led into his appreciation and passionate love for nature at a time when it was possible for him to combine the thoughtful passions with the experience of the eye and ear. In his student days he was accustomed to wander about, hand in hand with a companion, chanting verses from Goldsmith and Gray, but verses that he had begun to feel did not touch a high poetic level. The pleasure of the out of doors took the place of many libraries for him and for his sister.[5]

"One impulse from a vernal wood,
Could teach him more of Man
Of moral evil and of good,
Than all the sages can."

---

[1] - Works, ii,248. [2] - ii,292. [3] - ii,289.
[4] - ii,262. [5] - ii,287.

De Quincey observed Wordsworth's dislike for Southey's want of depth, and in turn Southey's dislike for Wordsworth's dogmatism and haughtiness. For Wordsworth seemed to consider some fields of thought locked up, and sacred to himself,[1] and when his self-appropriated rights were infringed upon, he would be unreasonably arrogant. His treatment of Charles Lloyd will illustrate this characteristic.[2] His intellectual passions were fervent, but they were animal, and based on animal appetites. How did a man of his peculiar nature ever succeed in a proposal of marriage? "For it seems scarcely possible to think of Wordsworth stooping to the humilities and devotions of courtship." He was a man who could not be openly flattered. His pride repelled such homage, and in such a tone of arrogance "that never failed to kindle the pride of the baffled flatterer."[3]

And finally a point that meant very much to De Quincey: of all the Lake Poets, Wordsworth was the "least tainted" as regarded principles of political economy, simply because he rarely applied himself to that subject. In fact he despised studies of a moral or political aspect, unless the truths were such as the poet's eye could detect in the philosophies of human nature.[4] Through such views, and his attempt to bring a new message, arose the scorn which greeted his first appearance, such scorn as always greets "truth struggling with cherished error," such scorn as made Christianity hated more that any society of error. The first shock from an encounter with the Wordsworthian doctrine of a higher transcendent truth of nature jarred against the ancient system of prejudice until the mind became jealous.

---

[1] - Works, iii,198. [2] - ii,389. [3] - ii,439. [4] - ii,341.

On the influence which the French Revolution exerted on Wordsworth, De Quincey said: "Mighty was the transformation it wrought in the economy of his thoughts; miraculous almost was the expansion which it gave to his human sympathies, chiefly in this it showed its effects- in the throwing the thoughts inwards into grand meditations upon man, his final destiny, his ultimate capacity of elevation; and secondly, in giving to the whole system of the thoughts and feelings a firmer tone and a sense of the awful realities which surround the mind; by comparision with which the previous literary tastes seemed (even where they were fine and elegant, as in Collins or Gray, unless they had the self-sufficing reality of religion, as in Cowper) fanciful and trivial. In all lands this result was accomplished and at the same time; and in Germany, or England alike, the poetry was so entirely regenerated, thrown into new modes of thought and of feeling that the poets everywhere felt themselves to be putting away childish things, and now first, among those of their own century, entering upon the dignity and the sincere thinking of mature manhood."[1] Fascinated by the "festival era" of the Revolution, while the "sleeping snakes" were yet covered with flowers, Wordsworth rushed to France, and fell in with that remarkable man, Beaupuis. De Quincey found a special significance in this man, and what he represented. "It opens one's eyes feelingly to the fact that, even in this thoughtless people, so full of vanity and levity, nevertheless, the awful temper of the times, and the dread burden of human interests with which it was charged, had called to a great final tribunal, even the gay, radiant creatures that, under less

---

1 - Works, ii,274.

solemn auspices, under the reign of a Francis I, or a Louis XIV, would have been the merest painted butterflies of the court sunshine." In the midst of this new movement Wordsworth moved, seeing with Beaupuis the hunger-stricken peasant girl, and thrilling with the spirit of repulsion from a political system that allowed such things to exist. Beaupuis had put on the garb of chivalry, of chivalry "the noblest in the world," and which opened his ear "to the Pariah, and the oppressed all over his misorganized country." When back fled the English from France, as that country was preparing to open a shambles for her noblest citizens, with them came Wordsworth, shocked at the crime done in the name of Liberty.[1]

In the essay "On Wordsworth's Poetry,"[2] written in 1845 and revised in 1857, De Quincey made his first formal attempt to critically review the whole writings of any author. Very appropriately the attempt was made with the author who more than any other had influenced his own life and work. The merits of Wordsworth's works, De Quincey said, are not only supreme, but unique; "not only supreme in their general class, but unique as in a class of their own." One fact of special interest to the curious is the contrast, dwelt upon time after time by De Quincey between the coldness of Wordsworth's early reception, and his popularity by the middle of the century.

One original obstacle to a favorable impression," and an obstacle purely self-created," was the theory of poetical diction which Wordsworth advanced. The preface to the second edition of his poems De Quincey found more injudicious than other men have ever done. His poetry was avowedly still experimental in subject and treatment, which "was surely trial enough for the reader's untrained

---

1 - Works, ii, 281.
2 - see vol. xi.

sensibility, without the unpopular novelty besides, as to the quality of the diction." This novelty was also in part false; the broad statement that the diction of ordinary life was the proper diction for poetry, was not what the writer meant. He, in practice, used only a part of this diction, and in addition, went far beyond the "idionatic language of life." Coleridge, for instance, found the "Excursion" bristling with "dictionary" words, i.e., of Latin or Greek origin. The truth is that the Latin element is as indispensable as the Saxon. "Pathos, in situations which are homely, or at all connected with domestic affections, naturally moves by Saxon words. Lyrical emotion of every kind which (to merit the name lyrical) must be in the state of flux and reflux, or, generally, of agitation, also requires the Saxon element of our language. And why? Because the Saxon is the aboriginal element- the basis, and not the superstructure; consequently it comprehends all the ideas which are natural to the heart of man, and to the elementary situations of life." Where the motion of the feeling is "by and through the ideas," the Latin will predominate. So grossly was Wordsworth mis understood that certain critics suggested,as a corollary to his theory, that Dryden and Pope be translated into the language of the prisons and street slang. Whereas Dryden and Pope, especially Dryden, in actuality, used the vernacular diction for which Wordsworth contended, though in Pope and, to a less degree, in Dryden, there is much that Wordsworth repudiated.

Hazlitt advanced "the least plausible objection" ever brought against Wordsworth's matter. "One would suppose from the tenor of his subjects, that on this earth there was neither marrying not giving in marriage." So De Quincey quotes Hazlitt. In

reply, De Quincey humorously referred to Hazlitt's own dislike or neglect of this marital spirit in poetry, and went on to explain that Wordsworth, for two reasons, could not "meddle with festal raptures like the glory of a wedding-day." These raptures are brief; they tend downwards; they never ascend. And, worse, they do not communicate themselves to others; the married ones "keep all the rapture to themselves." Secondly, Wordsworth, from the very essentials of his genius, could not deal with passion direct or modified, but in an oblique form, "under the shadow of some secondary passions.[1] So characteristic was this trait that even in unexpected poems a hint of something behind, "an oblique though evanescent image," flashes upon us.[2] "This influx of the joyous into the sad, and of the sad into the joyous . . may be sufficient to account for Wordsworth's not having chosen a theme of pure garish sunshine, such as the hurry of a wedding day, so long as others, more picturesque, or more plastic to a subtle purpose of creation were to be had." A wedding swamps the individuality of sentiment or character. "The epithalamia of Edmund Spenser are the most impassioned that exist; but nobody reads them."

The "Excursion," so far as the opening tale is concerned, needs a recast. The story of Margaret "rests upon a false basis." The incidents are untrue; "even for a romance it will not do, far less for a philosophic poem, dealing with intense realities." The leading character also is so doubtful as to cast objections onto the poem. The second tale is far different. It is "the impassioned record from the infidel history of those heart-breaking chapters in his own

---

[1] - "Two April Mornings;" "The Fountain;" "We Are Seven."
[2] - "Stray Pleasures."

life which had made him what the reader finds him." The narrative proves "grand and impassioned." "Nothing can be finer than when, upon the desolation of his household, upon the utter emptiness of his domestic chambers by the successive deaths of children and youthful wife, just at that moment the mighty phantom of the French Revolution rises solemnly above the horizon. Even then, even by this great vision, new earth and new heavens are promised to human nature; and suddenly the solitary man, translated by the frenzy of human grief into the frenzy of supernatural hopes, adopts these radiant visions for the darlings whom he has lost-

'Society becomes his glittering bride,
And airy hopes his children.'"

The only weakness lies in the loss of grandeur from the fact that the whole movement is not equally sustained.

This same connection, viz. Wordsworth and the French Revolution, seems to be as appropriate a point as I can select to introduce De Quincey's views on this same Revolution, inasmuch as his most clear exposition of them is given in this same essay "On Wordsworth's Poetry." Of those who were the pioneers in the movement we learn that De Quincey did not entirely approve. He did not regard Rousseau with much favor, while Thomas Paine he placed utterly without the pale. I quote the somewhat lengthy passage entire, realizing the importance of its bearing on the subject of De Quincey's romanticism.

"Indirectly, besides, it ought not to be overlooked that, as respects the French Revolution, the whole college of philosophy in the 'Excursion,' who are gathered upon the case of the recluse, make the same mistake that he makes. Why is the recluse disgusted

with the French Revolution? Because it had not fulfilled many of his expectations; and of those which it had fulfilled, some had soon been darkened by reverses. But really this was childish impatience. If a man depends for the exuberance of his harvest upon the splendor of the coming summer, we do not excuse him for taking prussic acid because it rains cats and dogs through the first ten days of April. All in good time, we say; take it easy; make acquaintance with May and June before you do anything rash. The French Revolution has not even yet (1845) come into full action. This mighty event was the explosion of a prodigious volcano, which scattered its lava over every kingdom of every continent, silently manuring them for social struggles; this lava is gradually fertilizing all soils in all countries; the revolutionary movement is moving onwards at this hour, as inexorable as ever. Listen, if you have ears for such spiritual sounds, to the mighty tide even now slowly coming up the sea to Milan, to Rome, to Naples, to Vienna. Hearken to the ominous undulations already breaking against the steps of that golden throne which stretches from St. Petersburg to Astraken; tremble at the hurricanes which have long been mustering about the pavilions of the Ottoman Padishah. All these are long swells settling in from original impulses and fermentations of the French Revolution. Even as regards France herself, that which gave the mortal offence to the sympathies of Wordsworth's "Solitary" was the Reign of Terror. But how thoughtless to measure the cycles of vast national revolutions by metres that would not stretch round an ordinary human career. Even to a frail sweetheart you would grant more indulgence than to be off in a pet because some momentary cloud arose between you. The Reign of Terror was a mere fleeting and

transitional phasis. The Napoleon dynasty was nothing more. Even that very Napoleon scourge which was supposed by many to have consummated and superseded the Revolution has itself passed away upon the wind- has itself been superseded- leaving no wreck, relic, or record behind, except precisely those changes which it worked, *not in its character of an enemy to the Revolution* (which also it was), *but as its servant and its tool*. See, even whilst we speak, the folly of that cynical sceptic who would not allow time for great natural processes of purification to travel onwards to their birth, or wait for the evolution of natural results: the storm that shocked him has wheeled away; the frost and the hail that offended him have done their office; the rain is over and gone; happier days have descended upon France; the voice of the turtle is heard in all her forests; once again, after two thousand years of serfdom, man walks with his head erect; Bastilles are no more; every cottage is searched by the golden light of law; and the privileges of religious conscience have been guaranteed and consecrated for ever and ever.

"Here, then, the poet himself, the philosophic Wanderer, the learned Vicar, are all equally in fault with the solitary Sceptic; for they all agree in treating his disappointment as sound and reasonable in itself, but blamable only in relation to those exalted hopes whibh he never ought to have encouraged. Right (they say) to consider the French Revolution now as a failure: but *not* right originally to have expected that it should succeed. Whereas in fact, gentlemen blockheads, it *has* succeeded; it is far beyond the reach of ruinous reactions; it is propagating its life; it is traveling on to new births- conquering and yet to conquer."

And also this foot-note: "The reader must not understand the writer as unconditionally approving of the French Revolution. It is his belief that the resistance to the Revolution was, in many high quarters, a sacred duty, and that this resistance it was which forced out, from the Revolution itself, the benefits which it has since diffused. The Revolution, and the resistance to the Revolution, were the two powers that quickened each the other for ultimate good. To speak by the language of mechanics, the case was one which illustrated the composition of forces. Neither the Revolution singly, nor the resistance to the Revolution singly, was calculated to regenerate social man. But the two forces in union, where the one modified, mitigated, or even neutralised, the other at times, and where, at times, each entered into a happy combination with the other, yielded for the world those benefits which, by its separate tendency, either of the two had been fitted to stifle."

In the general scheme and movement of the "Excursion," De Quincey found two defects which deserve mention. First, he found it lacking in unity, so that future generations will read it only in fragments, and secondly, in passages it becomes too colloquial.

Wordsworth's greatest influence with posterity lies in his shorter works. His short earlier poems scintillate with gems of profound truth. By his mastery he brought new truths into life which previously had been indistinct for all men. For instance, in the field of nature he used the cataract to exemplify stillness; he painted the cloud pageants as they may be seen at sunset. As regards sky-scenery, he first of all showed adequate appreciation; his sublime scenes stand unrivalled, and in one of his pictures he has given the true key-note of the sentiment belonging to these grand

pageants, which is that "these mimicries express the laughter which is in heaven at earthly pomps. Frail and vapory are the glories of man, even as the visionary parodies of those glories are frail, even as the scenical copies of those glories are frail, which nature weaves in clouds." Again, Wordsworth first of all brought out the peculiar effect of "iteration" as seen daily in the habits of cattle. In such things as these did Wordsworth perform his best service. "How often (to give an instance or two) must the human heart have felt the case, when there are sorrows which descend far below the region in which tears gather; and yet who has ever given utterance to this feeling until Wordsworth came with his immortal line:-

'Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears?'"

Yet one thing transcending everything else was his expression of the really permanent in human feelings. Young and Cowper were too circumscribed. These were popular from the start. But the very accuracy of Wordsworth's originality required twenty years to win the public love. Meditative poetry is taking up more and more the province of literature , and in this field Wordsworth need fear no rivalry save that of Shakespeare.

CHAPTER V.

DE QUINCEY AS A LITERARY CRITIC.

It is difficult to appraise De Quincey as a romanticist. Often, when we might expect him to show strong romantic tendencies, we find him strongly classic. The difficulty lies in two characteristics, one clearly classical, viz. his unquestioning acceptance of Church of England doctrines without subjecting them to that keen scrutiny which he brought to bear on every other subject, and his similar allegiance to Tory politics and conventional morality. The second characteristic is conspicuously romantic,viz. his desultory habits. In this respect he may, with justice, be grouped with Herder and Coleridge. All three were men of great erudition, amply fitted for monumental work. But all three, through lack of systematic application, so diffused their efforts that their magnificent projects in the literary, philosophical, and historical realms never materialised. Thus De Quincey presents a keen contrast to the busy Scott, whom, however, he resembled in political affiliation. Perhaps no better light can be had on De Quincey's peculiar views than in a survey of his opinions of and comments on the great landmarks of English literary history. For instance, he could not understand why Chaucer's language should be declared obsolete, or why the poet should receive such languid acknowledgment from his countrymen. This interest in the tenderness, picturesqueness, and narrative skill of Chaucer

was a romantic characteristic.[1]

It seems superfluous to speak of De Quincey's relations with Shakespeare, who never lost admiration and respect, even when criticism was levelled at his supposed faults with the greatest severity. Yet three points are worthy to be mentioned in passing: (a) the excellent criticism on the knocking at the gate in Macbeth;[2] (b) the comparis~~i~~on of Richter with Shakespeare;[3] and (c) the condemnation of Addison for never reading Shakespeare.[4] De Quincey contributed the biography of Shakespeare to the seventh edition of the Encyclopaedia Britannica. Perhaps the most noticeable point here, and that for no critical value, is the view taken on Shakespeare's marriage and reasons for leaving Stratford, both "wire-drawn,"(as Carlyle was wont to term many of De Quincey's conclusions), and pointing to a desire to clear Shakespeare himself of any hint of impropriety, or at least to excuse him. "Loves' Labour's Lost" is strangely called the least interesting of the plays. Again we observe appreciation of female character. To De Quincey Spenser's Una was "too shadowy and unreal for a dramatic reality," but he found great delight in studying the "radiant shapes" of Desdamona, Imogen, Hermione, Perdita, Ophelia, Miranda, and others.[5] He found, as well, extreme pleasure in Shakespeare's "mystic" scenes, scenes between fairies, and scenes too delicate for the appreciation of the average ear. The dialogue between Oberon and Titania in the "Midsummer-Night's Dream" he called one of the most delightful poetic scenes in literature. He greatly admired

---

[1] - Works, ii,58; xiii,287.
[2] - x,389-394.
[3] - xi,271.
[4] - iv,22,232 note; xi,19 note.
[5] - iv,70.

Shakespeare's knowledge of the "technic" of murder. But above all, the great thing was the universality of the man; in him did the superiority of the poet over mathematics or over any other science or art as a necessity to the human heart, find most abundant evidence. Great were the philosophers, the mathematicians; yet "how frosty is the feeling associated with these names by comparision with that which, upon every sunny lawn, by the side of every ancient forest, even in the farthest depths of Canada, many a young innocent girl, perhaps at this very moment- looking now with fear to the dark recesses of the infinite forest, and now with love to the pages of the infinite poet, until the fear is abolished and forgotten in the love- cherishes in her heart for the name and person of Shakespeare."

The little essay, "On the Knocking at the Gate in Macbeth" contains a somewhat memorable comment on the place of the understanding. The particular passage in"Macbeth" (scene ii in Act II) was for a long time incomprehensible to De Quincey himself. He felt that the knocking at the gate reflected back a peculiar awfulness and depth of solemnity upon the murder, but his understanding absolutely failed to solve the problem of the impression which the scene made, contrary to the dictates of reason. The conclusion is significant,viz. that the understanding is the meanest attribute of the mind, and least to be trusted, even though the majority of people trust to nothing else. The emotions, the feelings, the undefinable assurance that the thing in question possesses something much more impressive than any reason can assign to it, this conclusion is the key-note, the heart of the essay, the outburst of romanticism.

Neither did Milton require a restoration, though, to be sure, he had not received all the admiration that belonged to him. De Quincey first read him in Bentley's edition, at the age of fourteen, and in the "Confessions" he explicitly referred to the lamentations in "Samson Agonistes" and the Satanic speeches in "Paradise Lost," which moved him if anything in books could, when read slowly by himself.[1] His criticisms of Milton's slips were not always accurate.[2] Again, as in Shakespeare's case, De Quincey laid the blame for the unfortunate incidents in his married life to Mary Powell. He said:- "Every step which is made toward the white washing of the frivolous and unprincipled Mary Powell is a step towards the impeachment of Milton,- and impeachment in a case which, if any within the records of human experience, drew forth and emblazoned Milton's benign spirit of forgiveness, and his magnanimous forbearance when a triumph was offered at once to his partisanship as a politician, and to his insulted rights as a husband."[3] On the other hand, De Quincey did not excuse Milton for the rancorous hostility of his attacks on Episcopacy, but then De Quincey, as a faithful follower of Episcopal leadings, would naturally resent any attack on his cherished doctrines. Finally, in Milton only, De Quincey declared, was the power of the sublime revealed. In him only was this agency kept to a white heat without collapse. Milton was not an author among authors, nor a poet amongst poets; but a power amongst powers. The "Paradise Lost" is not a book amongst books, nor a poem amongst poems; "but a central force amongst forces."[4]

If it is difficult to definitely ascertain De Quincey's opinion of any one author, that author is Alexander Pope. De Quincey

---

[1] - Works. iii,430. [2] - x,418. [3] - iv,90. [4] - x,399.

admired Pope greatly, but for what reasons cannot be so easily declared as for what faults he criticised him. Pope had read little. His least interesting and feeblest work, the "Essay on Criticism," is "a mere versification, like a metrical multiplication table of commonplaces the most mouldy with which criticism has baited its rat-traps."[1] His qualities were those of his brethren, "impassioned thinking, powerful description, pathetic reflection, brilliant narration."[2] He differed from them only by going into the field of society, and viewing men as revealed by their manners. For this service literature is indebted to him. Earlier poets had won the laurels for the "grander trials of intellectual strength;" Pope gave English literature preeminence in "the sportive and aerial graces of the mock heroic and satiric muse," and thus the cycle of English poetry was perfected and made orbicular. He was the most brilliant of all wits. On the other hand, he and his school treated rhetoric most basely, degrading it to the "trivial commonplaces of compliment." The "Essay on Criticism" is "mouldy;" the "Rape of the Lock" is "the most exquisite monument of playful fancy that universal literature offers;"[3] but the "Dunciad is his masterpiece; and the "Essay on Man" his worst production. On Pope the man does De Quincey become particularly enigmatical. He declared him a Christian; he read Crashaw; and his own poems such as "Eloisa to Abelard," and the "Messiah" prove nominal Christianity. But he knew not how to interpret the testimonies of his own heart. In character he was incapable of a sincere thought; the slave of his social position, he lived luxuriously at his ease, an intellectual epicure. The

---

1 - Works, xi,29. 2 - iv,200ff. 3 - iv,260.

common people cannot appreciate Pope as they can appreciate a grander poet; he was too much of a liar. Neither was he a moral thinker. Why, then, did De Quincey admire him?

In the essay, "The Poetry of Pope,"[1] it is suggested that "Eloisa to Abelard" indicates the original destination of Pope's intellect, and the strength of his native vocation to a class of poetry in deeper keys of passion than any which he systematically cultivated. The reader very quickly becomes in sympathy with the nun, through the tumult of changes, hopes and tears, rapture, penitence, despair, of the poem. The "Satires, or Moral Epistles" give evidence of Pope's voluptuous indolence. He did not have the satiric heart. "He was too contented with society as he found it." Except on those evenings when "suffering horribly from indigestion" he ought not to have attempted satire. Especially when he took Warburton as his guide did his good sense leave him. The satires on women De Quincey found to be very bad, and to reveal the false Principles on which Pope worked. To the keenly appreciative Sensibilities of a man who gave Woman the deepest reverence, following a man of genius "through a succession of inanities descending into absolute nonsense, and of vulgar fictions sometimes terminating in brutalities," not only the lack of truth shocked him, but even more painful was the exhibition of lack of those ennobling emotions which De Quincey believed essential in character.

When assigning Pope's position in literature, De Quincey viewed the problem in relation to a couple of popular errors, first, that Pope belonged to the so-called French school, and, secondly, that his distinguishing mark over preceding poets was correctness,

---

[1] - Works, xi, 51 - 97.

two errors which De Quincey indignantly refuted. The first point, he said, can be refuted by a glance at the evolution of literature.[1] First, in the earliest stages, we deal with the great "elementary grandeurs of passion, of conscience, of the will in self-conflict," and we produce an "Iliad," a "Paradise Lost." As society is affected by town life, these gloomier and grander phases make way for the development of the lower faculties of the mind,- "fancy, and the habit of minute distinction." These are the major and the minor keys of literature. Shakespeare, Spenser, and Milton, De Quincey said, surely gained nothing from the Italian, and Dryden and Pope would have done as they did, had France "been at the back of China." The school to which they belong developed at a certain stage in all the nations. "Dryden openly ridiculed French literature," and Pope read little of it. As to his correctness, he did indeed escape vulgarism, except as misled by his aristocratic associations, but his grammar De Quincey declared to be vicious, though not any worse that that of his contemporaries, who utterly neglected the models in Spenser, Shakespeare, the King Jame's Bible, and Milton, where grammatical errors were few. Pope was often guilty of violating the idiom, often incoherent in his use of language, almost expressing things in cipher."A poet's _correctness_ is shown in his intelligibility."

De Quincey charged Addison with ignorance of his own nation's literature,[2] and also with the opinion that such knowledge had no essential importance in the training of a scholar and lit~~t~~erateur. He was "profoundly ignorant" of Chaucer and Spenser, and knew Milton only as a brilliant scholar, connecting Christian and Pagan literature. The dramatists of 1590 - 1630 "confounded and overwhelmed him."

---

[1] - See essay,"The Poetry of Pope," above. [2] - Works, iv,23.

In his own intellectual make-up Addison was feeble and deficient, too immature to go any distance in critical research.[1] Thus, in his papers on "Paradise Lost," which did Milton service in giving the "initial bias to the national mind," despite much just feeling and appreciation, De Quincey discovered some "gross blunders" of criticism, just such blunders as Dr. Johnson made, and from the same cause, viz. failure to understand, a feeble capacity for passions, which, "upon a question of passion, constitutes a feeble range of intellect." Addison erred most when attempting to be complimentary, when he called the "Paradise Lost" a "Grecian palace as to amplitude, symmetry, and architectural skill; but being in the English language, . . to be regarded as if built in brick, whereas had it been so happy as to be written in Greek, then it would have been a palace built in Parian marble."[2] De Quincey's assurance that all the "Spectator" references to Shakespeare came from Steele was of course incorrect. However the fact of the assertion proves the aim of his criticism.

An investigation into Queen Anne society would have pleased De Quincey- an examination of its extreme artificiality, sheepish reserve, and "shameless outrages upon all the decencies of human nature." Thus Addison, like his age, blushed at sympathy with the lovely and impassioned. Men were ashamed of their own nature, "and perhaps with reason; for in their own denaturalized hearts they read only a degraded nature."[3] Addison carefully avoided any offence against good taste. "He durst not for his life have used the word 'passion,' except in the vulgar sense of an angry

---

[1] - Works, x,408. [2] - xi,24. [3] - xi,21.

paroxysm. He durst as soon have danced a hornpipe on top of the 'Monument' as have talked of a 'rapturous emotion.' What would he have said? Why, 'sentiments that were of a nature to prove agreeable after an unusual rate.'"[1] De Quincey explained Addison's reverence for Milton and lack of appreciation for Shakespeare on the ground that the impassioned in connection with reality he could not understand or tolerate; but when combined with "elder forms of eternal abstractions," as in Milton's "cathedral-chanting," being in "a more stationary key of solemnity," it appealed to him. As a poet, then, Addison was a son of the feeble (his "Blenheim" might have been a translation from some German original of the time[2]); he will live as a man of real genius for his delineations of character and manner, and in the "delicacies of his humour."

Dr. Samuel Johnson, "the worst enemy that Milton and his great cause have ever been called on to confront,"[3] De Quincey branded for his malice toward the Puritan poet. Dr. Johnson read little and faultily, was capricious in temper, irregular of knowledge, incoherent, and unsystematic; malignant toward Milton for his republican and regicide politics. Such was De Quincey's opinion of Dr. Johnson, and with it I complete my hasty and inadequate glance at the great figures of classicism as De Quincey saw them. He admired much in each of them, no doubt even in Dr. Johnson; yet he likewise found many faults in them, and perhaps did them unwarranted injustice. One thing is clear: his criticisms are not purely romantic. The Augustans possessed much that he felt constrained to praise, especially in his instructive remark on Pope, with his mock heroics as completing the cycle of English poetry.

---

[1] - Works, xi,21. [2] - xi,27. [3] - iv,105.

Likewise a glance at a few of the romanticists through De Quincey's eyes will reveal incongruities. Before he had reached the age of sixteen, or at about that age, according to his own account, he had made himself familiar not only with Chatterton and the Rowley controversy,[1] but as well with the "Black Letter," and, with unaffected pleasure, the old English metrical romances. Thus he had an interest in the period from which the forgeries reputed to have survived, but on the value of the papers themselves he merely commented that no one of any taste would think of assigning them to the time of Henry IV. Of Ossian, he told the common opinion of himself and Wordsworth in the passage: "We scorn the Ossian of 1766. No man scorns Ossian, the son of Fingal of A.D. 366."[2]

Goldsmith he did not admire, though an adequate explanation for this attitude cannot be given.[3] His comments on Goldsmith lend no light, except on such points as his troubled life, which De Quincey believed to have been of average happiness; and his constitutional gaiety of heart, hilarity, and "knack of hoping." He summed Goldsmith as "true, natural, sweet, gentle," a man who in De Quincey's own revolutionary age, could not have escaped an unsettled reason. The comment appears fruitful, one that reveals De Quincey's aptness and ability at quick, keen, accurate summaries of essentialities in character.

Need we be surprised to find Horace Walpole severely criticised, and the "Castle of Otranto" thus condemned:- "A most weak and extravagant fiction, in which the coarse, the clumsy, the palpable, and the material, are substituted for the aerial, the

---

[1] - Works, ii,58.   [2] - iii,148.   [3] - iv,289-322.

spiritual, and the shadowy; the superficial agency being the paste board machinery of a pantomime?"[1] Though "Klosterheim," De Quincey's own medieval romance, also comes dangerously near to the "Gothic" extravagances thus condemned. Perhaps Walpole's treatment of Chatterton, which De Quincey deplored, influenced the criticism.

Burke De Quincey praised as the supreme writer of his century.[2] For De Quincey's attitude towards Burns there surely can be no excuse, even though Scott and Byron thought but little better of him than the man who called his popularity a "craze." He thought that Burns lived a century too soon, that his wild and ferocious spirit of independence had not the recognition and development that the later period would have afforded.[3] His prose (as in the letters) De Quincey classed as "vulgar, tawdry, coarse, and commonplace." The temperament of the man himself he declared rightly summarized in the phrase "of the earth,earthy." To this derogatory criticism and lukewarm interest of De Quincey, Scott, and Byron, we have as interesting contrast, the keen appreciation from Wordsworth.

And now returning to actual contemporaries of De Quincey, we find him doubtful of Byron's place, and suggesting that Byron owed his influence to aristocratic connections.[4] Byron's attack on the wives of Southey and Coleridge De Quincey declared "ignoble and vile above all words,"[5] perhaps about the same grade of rubbish as he declared much of his writings to be. So completely did he ignore Byron, except for such casual references, that no actual criticism of his works came from the Opium-Eater's pen.

---

1 - Works, v,150.   2 - x,114,125 note.   3 - ii,130ff.
4 - xi, 8.   5 - ii,157.

"The very best of all human stories."[1] That is De Quincey on Charles Lamb's account of roast pork. This child-like man, "shy profundity of surprised self-communion," was a man dear to De Quincey. "Destined to be forever unpopular, but yet forever interesting."[2] De Quincey declared that history does not present a more touching picture of sorrow than the life of Charles and Mary Lamb, nor is a period of forty years in any other life so crowned with more absolute victory.[3] Charles Lamb was insensible to music, thus he had no sense of the rhythmical in prose composition. He had no genial appreciation of Milton. "Paradise Lost" was not to his taste. But- "neglected people in every class won the sympathy of Lamb."[4] He was a Christian; at least he so became after the preliminary romantic "excursion" through the fields of Unitarianism. He resembled Scott in the dramatic make-up of his mind;[5] and in his humor he was the antitype of Professor Wilson. He will live in his "Essays of Elia." They are as exquisite a gem as any nation can show. Lamb was a"Diogenes with the heart of a Saint John. I am disposed to pronounce him the best man, the nearest in his approaches to an ideal standard of excellency, that I have known or read of."[6] He was no politician, but he took a secret, silent pleasure in the grandeur of his country.

Charles Lloyd! A man never to be forgotten. With but one taint. "He was somewhat too Rousseauish." Like De Quincey, he took opium, indulged in long walks, and was fond of children. Possibly he was the most typically romantic of De Quincey's acquaintances. By temperament he was unfitted to contend against the world, lacking fortitude of mind. He had a most exquisite sensibility, a curse as

---

[1] - Works, vii,15. [2] - v,216. [3] - v,220. [4] - v,254.
[5] - iii,88. [6] - iii,48.

it proved. There was something effeminate about it, which provoked the ridicule of Wordsworth, whose character was eminently masculine. Lloyd's poems cannot place him among the powerful poets; they have many weaknesses of construction and conception; but they have a real and mournful merit in that they are founded on the unexaggerated affliction of his own life. His best work was done in that department of literature which "deals in the analysis of human passions, or attempts to exhibit the development of human character, in relation to sexual attachments, when placed in trying circumstances."[1]

De Quincey considered Southey as a litterateur, "the most accomplished among the erudite scholars of his time;"[2] the most industrious literary man on record. Despite his indefatigibility he was deficient in loftiness of style. Southey's mind was elevated, but not sustained by the higher modes of enthusiasm. A great dedication, full of measured solemnity, with majestic pretensions, a pleading against some great national injustice, a "Defensio Pro Populo Anglicano:" none of these things could Southey have produced.[3] With Wordsworth he exchanged the old "prescriptive diction of poetry" for " the simple and profounder forms of daily life in some instances, and of the Bible in others." Yet he did not hold entirely with Wordsworth. He believed Wordsworth's theory of poetical diction largely founded on error. The resemblances in diction arose merely from a common reverence for Scriptural language, a field common to the Lakists. The publication of his epic poem, "Joan of Arc," was the main incident of importance in literature for the year 1796.[4] This was his first work of much pretension, " and by many degrees it was the worst." The two fatal faults were, first, his sympathy with the

---

1 - Works, ii,390. 2 - ii,338. 3 - ii,346. 4 - v,238ff.

French Revolution, which actually meant sympathy with the opening prosperity of man, sympathy "with the Pariah of every clime,"not at all the movement in Joan's time; and secondly, he ended the poem just where Joan's "grander mission" began.

De Quincey found Hazlitt to be a misanthrope by constitution. "Whatever is, is wrong." Yet the richness of his intellect amply rewards his readers. In his manner he was gloomy, and excited suspicion. A friend (probably Charles Lamb), once felt in his presence "a sudden recoil of fear, as from one who was searching for a hidden dagger." Hazlitt had "the unresting irritability of Rousseau, but in a nobler shape. Rousseau transfigured every possible act or design of his acquaintance into some personal relation to himself. Hazlitt viewed all personal affronts or casual slights towards himself as tending to something more general, and masquing, under a pretended honor of Hazlitt the author, a real hatred, deeper than it was always safe to avow, for those social interests which he was reputed to defend."But, despite his life as a sort of wandering Jew, and the many other eccentricities which might be brought against him, both enemies and friends cannot but join in admiration for him. As De Quincey quoted from Gilfillan:- "'Both will readily concede <u>now</u> that a subtle thinker, an eloquent writer, a lover of beauty and poetry, and man and truth, one of the best of critics, and not the worst of men, expired in William Hazlitt.' Requiescat in pace!"[1]

"There is no writer named amongst men of whom so much as of Percy Bysshe Shelley it is difficult for a conscientious critic to

---

[1] - Works, xi, 341 - 354.

speak with the profound respect, on the one hand, due to his exalted powers, and yet without offence, on the other, to feelings the most sacred which too memorably he outraged. The indignation which this powerful young writer provoked had its root in no personal feelings,- those would have proved transitory; but in feelings the holiest which brood over human interests and which guard the sanctuary of religious truth. Consequently,- which is a melancholy thought for any friend of Shelley's,- the indignation is likely to be co-extensive and co-enduring with the writings that provoked it. That bitterness of scorn and defiance which still burns against his name in the most extensively meditative section of English society- viz. the religious section- is not of a nature to be propitiated. Selfish interests, being wounded, might be compensated; merely human interests might be soothed: but interests that transcend all human valuation, being so insulted, must upon principle reject all human ransom or condition of human compromise. Less than penitential recantation could not be accepted; and that is now impossible. 'Will ye transact with God?' is the indignant language of Milton in a case of that nature. And in this case the language of many pious men said aloud- 'It is for God to forgive; but we, His servants, are bound to recollect that this young man offered to Christ and to Christianity the deepest insult which ear has heard or which it has entered into the heart of man to conceive.'" His affronts to Christ had no possible support from Scriptural suggestion. He called Moses a murderer; declared God malignant in His soul; and that Christ shed malice from the cross, and in death uttered a curse. No change of environment in youth would have altered Shelley. In all he was absolutely sincere. "His feud with Christianity was a craze derived from some early wrench

of his understanding, and made obstinate to the degree in which we find it from having rooted itself in certain combinations of ideas that, once coalescing, could not be shaken loose,- such as that Christianity underpropped the corruptions of the earth in the shape of wicked governments that might else have been overthrown, or of wicked priesthoods that, but for the shelter of shadowy and spiritual terrors, must have trembled before those whom they overawed." Shelley carried his irreligion to a point beyond all others; he did not believe and tremble, he believed and hated. Yet his moral qualities were admirable. His nature, and features, had something seraphic. "He was the sincerest and the most truthful of human creatures. He was also the purest." He denounced marriage, yet this came only as one phase of his lunacy. "When one recurs to his gracious nature, his fearlessness, his truth, his purity from all fleshliness of appetite, his freedom from vanity, his diffusive love and tenderness, suddenly out of the darkness reveals itself a morning of May, forests and thickets of roses advance to the foreground, and from the midst of them looks out the 'eternal child,' cleansed from his sorrow, radiant with joy, having power given him to forget the misery which he suffered , power given him to forget the misery which he caused, and leaning with his heart upon that dove-like faith against which his erring intellect had rebelled."[1]

De Quincey believed English literature unrivalled, and that no French school, or any other school, had ever had any influence.[2] Indeed the glorious achievements of English literature

---

[1] - Works, xi,354 ff.

[2] - i,342; iii,266; xi,60,137-145.

are beyond the highest bursts of any other language or literature. Thus, in the seventeenth century (1628 - 1700 in particular) eloquence flourished, and Donne, Chillingworth, Sir Thomas Browne, Jeremy Taylor, Milton, South, Barrow, formed a group that "no literature can match in their class." And of the period of the drama (1580 - 1635) De Quincey said that not even Athens, England's nearest rival, presented "such a multiform theater, such a carnival display, mask and anti-mask of impassioned life." This was patriotism. In political institutions England had no superior; in literature, likewise, she had her own par excellent history and accomplishments. And from such exuberant patriotism came De Quincey's prophecy that "within the next two centuries" all the barbarous languages of the world would be absorbed by four European tongues, English, Spanish, Portuguese, and Russian.[1]

France never had any influence over English literature. She had not the ability. In De Quincey's time French literature suffered from "phthisis, dotage, palsy," and whatever else that will express "the most abject state of senile (senile? no! of anile) imbecility."[2] In its best days it was narrow, without nerve. The French thinkers of the time were all mad, "crazy with the laughing-gas of recovered liberty; drunk with the wine-cup of their mighty Revolution; snorting, whinnying, throwing up their heels, like wild horses in the boundless Pampas, and running races of defiance with the snipes, or with the winds, or with their own shadows, if they can find nothing else to challenge."[3] And Rousseau- only in one place does De Quincey come out in a direct criticism, and then to call a passage from his "Confessions," extravagant silliness.[4]

---

1 - Works, x, 33. 2 - xi,260. 3 - v, 386. 4 - viii,425.

German literature, on the contrary, had concrete advantages to De Quincey's mind, especially in its originality, its boldness of speculation, and the character of "masculine austerity and precision" in its scientific labors.[1] While he was scarcely a pioneer in the German revival in England, and perhaps not so important as others in that movement, he yet merits attention. He made his first acquaintance with German literature when wandering in Wales; his minute research in this field dated from his Oxford residence.

He found German literature, since its revival in the previous century, to have remained practically stagnant, so far as freedom of natural grace was concerned. There was but little in tha revival to impress De Quincey. "Such cattle" as influenced it: "the never-enough-to-be-despised- Gottsched,"[2] who might have had enough genius for the composition of a Latin grammar, but never enough to permit him to preside over the German muses, and Bodmer,[3] who had little genius, but some taste, and some sensibility. "He lived among the Alps, and his reading lay among the Alpine sublimities of Milton and Shakespeare." He scorned Gottsched with h monstrous compound of German coarseness and French sensual levity. Klopstock also could not win De Quincey's admiration.[3] Though a fervent, religious, and anti-Gallian man, on the other hand he was the child of enthusiasms that failed to join themselves to the masculine intellect, or the meditative range, which his subjects required. He rendered valuable service as a restorer of the German mother-tongue to its purity.

---

1 - Works, x. 63.   2 - ii,172.   3 - ii,170; iv, 426.

In 1805 De Quincey became acquainted with Goethe, a surprised acquaintance that never ripened into respect. The "Wilhelm Meister" he branded as "at open war, not with decorum and good taste merely, but with the moral purity and the dignity of human nature."[1] Goethe's infidelity was of course criticised. "There can be no gloomier form of infidelity that that which questions the moral attributes of the Great Being in whose hands are the final destinies of us all. Such, however, was the form of Goethe's earliest scepticism, such its origin, and such, for anything that appears, continued to the close of his life, if speculations so crude could be said to have any form at all." Coleridge far surpassed Goethe in power and compass of intellect, according to De Quincey, who made this prophecy regarding the two men: "But the honors of Coleridge are perennial, and will anually grow more verdant; whilst, from those of Goethe, every generation will see something fall away, until posterity will wonder at the subverted idol, whose basis, being hollow and unsound, will leave the worship of their fathers an enigma to their descendants."

As De Quincey's essay on "Goethe's Wilhelm Meister" [2] has become but little more than a literary curiosity, any detailed review of it would be merely picturing De Quincey at his worst, or rather, it would only be a caricature of De Quincey, so unlike his customary manner is this paper. The first edition of it, in 1842, is of interest chiefly for its references to Carlyle as a translator, references which were very properly expunged from the revised edition of 1859. Yet much in depreciation of Goethe remained, though De

---

[1] - Works, iv, 417.   [2] - xi, 222 - 258.

Quincey had learned to give to him greater respect than in the earlier paper. I quote a sentence or two from the suppressed edition of 1824:- "No other of Goethe's works is likely to be more revolting to English good sense: the whole prestige of his name must now totter. A blow or two from a few vigorous understandings, well planted and adequately published to the world, combined with the overpowering abominations of the work itself, will set in movement this yet torpid body of feeling, determine the current of popular opinion (so far as any <u>popular</u> opinion can be possible) on the question of Mr. Goethe, and forever dissolve the puny fabric of baby-houses which we are now audaciously summoned to plant 'fast by the oracles of God' as fit neighbors to the divine temples of Milton and of Shakespeare." The criticism of the translator, Carlyle, was sufficiently harsh to arouse indignation in London circles. After giving a long list of provincialisms, faults in diction, vulgarisms, and so forth, De Quincey wound up with this sweeping assertion:- "These illustrations are sufficient to illustrate the coarseness of diction which disfigure the English translation, and which must have arisen from want of sufficient intercourse with society."[1]

If Goethe had no right to be called the German Coleridge, there was no question in De Quincey's mind that Herder fully deserved to be given that distinction.[2] Herder and Coleridge possessed "the same all-grasping erudition, the same spirit of universal research, the same disfiguring superficiality and inaccuracy, the same indeterminateness of object, the same obscure and fanciful mysticism, the same plethoric fulness of thought, the same fine sense of the beautiful, and (I think) the same incapacity for dealing with simple

---

[1] - Works, xi,222 note.   iv, 381ff.

and austere grandeur." De Quincey found Herder's greatest weakness in his admiration for Ossian; that error Coleridge apparently escaped. Herder's home life delighted De Quincey, for whom such scenes of domestic felicity had always great attraction. "Seldom, indeed, on this earth can there have been a fireside more hallowed by love and pure domestic affections than that of Herder. He wanted only freedom from the cares which possessed him, and perhaps a little well-boiled opium, combined with a good deal of lemonade or orangeade, to have been the happiest man in Germany. With an angel of a wife, with the love and sympathy of all Germany, and with a medicine for his nerves, what more could the heart of man desire?"

De Quincey did Ludwig Tieck service by translating his "Love-Charm," and appending a brief criticism of the author.[1] Kant exerted a vast influence over De Quincey as over Coleridge, but, since the name Kant in an essay of De Quincey's, is the signal for a downpour of German metaphysics, a mere enumeration of a few more important services rendered to Kant by De Quincey must suffice in this connection. The first point was the introduction of Kant to the English people as an interesting individual.[2] De Quincey also reviewed his philosophy,[3] his admiration of the British character,[4] his attack on the English nation, his ideas on veracity and perpetual peace, his influence on religious philosophy, his enmity towards Christianity, and the stimulations which his era received from the French Revolution.[5]

---

[1] - Works, xii, 463 - 467. [2] - iv, 323 - 379. [3] - x,64,80,etc.
[4] - viii,364; x 262 note. [5] - x, 200,259,262; xi, 262.

Lessing De Quincey hailed as the restorer and modern father of German literature. In the hands of the Gottsched school German literature had become a base travesty of Parisian levity, so that Lessing found it fallen into a state of torpor. Lessing was himself nothing more than a man of talent. "His plummet, if not suited to the soundless depths of Shakespeare, was able ten times over to fathom the little rivulets of Parisian philosophy. This he did effectually, and thus unconsciously levelled the paths for Shakespeare, and for that supreme dominion which he has since held over the German stage, by crushing the pretensions of all who stood in the way."[1] He applied philosophy to literature and to the fine arts. His Grecian eye aided him in such work. Thus he became the founder of German criticism. "The English reader will make a tolerably just estimate of Lessing's rank in German literature, if he classes him, as to degree of influence, with Dr. Johnson."[2] The "Laocoon" De Quincey found to be perhaps most characteristic of his mind. De Quincey's annotated and abbreviated translation of this work appeared in the "London Magazine" for November, 1826, and January, 1827, the first English translation. It was far from complete, including but thirteen of the original twenty-nine sections of the original, and translated after De Quincey's easy fashion. Nevertheless De Quincey performed nothing less than a public service. The first complete translation is probably the one dating from 1836; a third was published in 1859, and two appeared in 1874; one of these, by Sir Robert Phillimore, the best of the four, acknowledges the valuable work done by De Quincey forty-six years earlier.

---

[1] - Works, iv, 428. [2] - xi, 157.

De Quincey was also the first to throw radiance around the name of Jean Paul Richter. In point of originality, Richter stood above every other German author, nor, in De Quincey's mind, will a successor ever arise. His great characteristic distinction among all writers of his time was "the two headed power which he possesses over the pathetic and the humorous. The pathetic and the humorous are but different phases of the same orb; they assist each other, melt indiscernibly into each other, and often shine through each other, like layers of colored crystals placed one behind another. Take as an illustration Mrs. Quickly's account of Falstaff's death.[1] I cannot but consider Jean Paul Richter as by far the most eminent artist in that way since the time of Shakespeare."[2] To nothing "in heaven, or earth, or the waters under the earth," except to the same faculty in Shakespeare can the activity of his intellect be compared. His works are the galaxy of the German literary firmament. No sentence lacks vitality; none but is ebullient with wit. Like Shakespeare, his spirit is kindly, his satire playful and clad in smiles, never bitter or malignant. The "Analects from Richter" appeared in the "London Magazine" between 1821 and 1824. The titles will give a general impression of them, and a hint at De Quincey's reasons for centering his attention upon them. The most notable of the excerpts, and the most lengthy, is "The House of Weeping,"[3] an amusing sketch decidedly novel to an English ear; others of almost equal interest are "Complaint of the Bird in a Darkened Cage;" "Night;" "The Grandeur of Man in his Littleness;" "Fancy;" and the "Dream upon the Universe." While De Quincey probably rightly claimed

---

1 - Henry V. Act II, Scene 3. 2 - Works, xi, 263.
3 - "Analects from Richter," Works, xi, 277-293.

to be the pioneer in making Richter known, yet to Carlyle, a few years later, fell the honor of first giving him an entirely adequate and comprehensive welcome.

With Schiller the German trilogy who were favorites with De Quincey is completed. He had studied Kant for his philosophy; he had venerated Richter for his works; with Schiller he loved the memory of the man. English students of German literature, De Quincey said, should respect Schiller as the representative of the German intellect in its highest form. For to him "it is certainly due that the German intellect has become a great power, and power of growing magnitude for the great commonwealths of Christendom." His "Wallenstein" is nothing short of immortal, beyond all competition the nearest to the dramas of Shakespeare. More than a great author, he was a great man; his works are no more worthy of being studied for their force and originality "than his moral character for its nobility and aspiring grandeur."[1]

Literature was to De Quincey a fine art, the supreme fine art, in fact,[2] and like all the fine arts, sunk to a low rank in the utilitarian republicanism of the period, when everything intangible fell into the category of mere levity, to be considered in the same light as dressing, or "a showy piece of upholstery." Without a trained body of men dedicated <u>wholly</u> to literature, the art must decay,[3] for those preoccupied with other pursuits cannot accomplish any distinctive success.

There can be no such thing as didactic poetry.[4] "Either the poet selects an art which furnishes the <u>occasion</u> for a series of picturesque exhibitions (as Virgil,Dyer,etc.), and in that case it is

---

[1] - Works, iv, 439. [2] - x,47. [3] - x,21. [4] - xi,380.

true that he derives part of his power from the art which he delivers,- not however from what is essential to the art, but from its accidents and adjuncts: either he does this or else (as in the case with Lord Roscommon, Pope, etc.), so far from seeking in his subject for any part of his power, he seeks in that only for the resistance with which he contends by means of the power derived from the verse and the artifices of style."[1] The great strength of the "Paradise Lost" lies in the fact that it communicates power, a pretension "far above all communications of knowledge." For, "all that is literature seeks to communicate power; all that is not literature, to communicate knowledge."[2] The theory did not originate with him, for Wordsworth had made use of it. Thus hymns have influence as a Christian agency, because through them as essentially individual, the individual soul communes and receives strength from the spirit of Christianity.

There are two functions of literature, two separate offices that may blend, and often do so, but also may be carefully insulated. There is first the literature of knowledge;and, secondly, the literature of power, of which somewhat has already been said.[3] The function of the first is to teach; of the second- to move. The first speaks merely to the understanding; the second may speak ultimately to the reason, but always through the affections of pleasure and sympathy. For instance, we learn nothing from "Paradise Lost," and we can learn a great deal from a cookery book. But this fact does not place the two on a level. Our knowledge gained from Milton is not knowledge "of which a million separate items are still

---

[1] - Works, x, 27. [2] - x, 48.
[3] - See "The Poetry of Pope," vol. xi.

but a million of advancing steps on the same earthly level;" what we do get is power, that is, "exercise and expansion to our own latent capacity of sympathy with the infinite, where every pulse and each separate influx is a step upwards, a step ascending upon a Jacob's ladder from earth to mysterious altitudes above the earth." The very first step is a flight. If it were not that human sensibilities would droop and dwindle, just as muscular energy shrinks when not used. But these moral capacities survive, and in them the literature of power lives and operates. The power literature is saved from violation and made inaccessible to fraud. "The knowledge literature, like the fashion of the world, passeth away." But the power literature abides forever.

On the subject of rhetoric, to which De Quincey devoted an essay, he held views somewhat unique. It was not for him art of style, but the art of one particular kind of style, the ornate. The survey of the history of rhetorical style is one of the very best of his papers, especially valuable for the list of those whom he regarded as the great artists of rhetorical style in English literature This essay appeared first in 1828. I will close my present chapter with a brief digest of this essay, and also of the essay on "Style," published in 1840.[1]

The definition of rhetoric reads: "The art of aggrandizing and bringing out into strong relief by means of various and striking thoughts, some aspect of truth which of itself is supported by no spontaneous feelings, and therefore rests upon artificial aids," or, as explained by Professor Masson," the art of intellectual and

---

1 - Essays on "Rhetoric" and "Style," vol. x.

fantastic play with any subject to its utmost capabilities, or the art of enriching any main truth or idea by inweaving with it the largest possible amount of subsidiary and illustrative thought and fancy." There was in Athenian oratory no chance for rhetoric, which found its El Dorado in the sinewy compactness of the Latin language. In the later Latin rhetoric became weaker, and gradually expired, to flourish for a time in modern European literature. The great triumphs, however, have belonged to a past age, and their like may never be seen again. "The age of Rhetoric, like that of Chivalry, has passed amongst forgotten things; and the rhetorician can have no more chance for returning than the rhapsodist of early Greece or the troubadour of romance." Eloquence, in one form or another, is immortal, "will never perish so long as there are human hearts moving under the agitations of hope and fear, love and passionate hatred." To the modern world it is found in the sanctities of religion, a field unknown to antiquity.

The first eminent English rhetorician was John Donne, whom Dr. Johnson termed a metaphysical poet; more accurately the school should have been termed rhetorical. Donne combined- what no other man has ever done- "the last sublimation of dialectical subtlety and address with the most impassioned majesty." The mistake in terming artificial display a perversion of taste is false, "the artifice and machinery of rhetoric furnishes in its degrees as legitimate a basis for intellectual pleasure as any other." Next on the list De Quincey took up Burton and Milton. Each had a defect: "Burton too quaint, fantastic, and disjointed; Milton too slow, solemn and continuous." Burton was capricious: "he does not dance, but caper;" Milton "polonaises with a grand Castilian air,"

his thoughts and imagery appearing to move to the music of the organ. The "Protagonistae" of English rhetoric were Jeremy Taylor and Sir Thomas Browne, "undoubtedly the richest, the most dazzling, with reference to their matter, the most captivating, of all rhetoricians." For instance, "where but in Sir Thomas Browne shall one hope to find music so Miltonic, an intonation of such solemn chords as are struck in the opening bar of a passage in the "Urn-Burial?'"[1] Taylor's most obvious defect was in his mechanical art, his technic. With the departure of Browne and Taylor, "the great oracles of rhetoric were finally silenced."

Of the lesser contributions to rhetoric, none are of more importance than Burke's "genuine and priceless jewels," the man whose peculiar distinction was "that he viewed all objects of the understanding under more relations than other men, and under more complex relations." Yet in but few instances did Burke indulge himself in a pure rhetorician's use of fancy.

The essay on "Style" opens with an indignant protest against the subservient attitude of the British nature to foreign influences. Such weakness of national character struck De Quincey to the quick. The lack of patriotic warmth in Wordsworth was one cause for the estrangement between the friends. In the "English Mail Coach" the strain of jubilant patriotism attains a high level of sublimity. The English were shamefully at fault in three ways: (a) "semi-delirious lords and ladies sometimes theatrically costumed in Caftans and turbans open their households to all the world, save only their British compatriots;" (b) De Quincey felt ashamed of the

---

[1] - The passage referred to begins thus: "Now, since these bones have rested quietly in the grave under the drums and tramplings of three conquests."

obtuseness of his countrymen toward worth while music, such as that of Mozart, for which he had a very sensitive ear; (c) the third error "tends in all things to set the matter above the manner; the substance above the external show."

Somewhat in the same connection is De Quincey's definition of an "essay," a paper "addressed purely or primarily to the understanding as an insulated faculty; containing a good deal of the speculative element."[1] It must be a contribution to knowledge; it must possess novelty. The essayist cannot write unless he has thoughtfully considered his subject. How well De Quincey followed his own theory can be seen in a hundred places, perhaps to as good advantage as in any essay, in the essay on the "Essenes."[2] He never left a question exactly as he found it; always he suggested something that remains permanently with his readers as a "ferment" for further thought.

---

1 - Works, vi, 10.
2 - i,10; vii,2,7,101-172; 202-246.

CHAPTER VI.

DE QUINCEY'S ORIGINAL CONTRIBUTION TO LITERATURE; SUMMARY.

In this concluding chapter I shall comment very briefly on De Quincey's prose style, and on his original contribution to English literature. In closing the chapter I shall catalogue briefly his chief characteristics as romantic or pseudo-classic, making my classification as exact as is possible.

Good classifications of De Quincey's prose exist, and can readily be consulted. I shall merely call attention to the three varieties of prose which he himself recognized and employed: (a) the rhetorical; (b) eloquent prose; and (c) prose phantasy; of each somewhat has been said throughout the course of this paper. The impression left upon the reader is, at least the impression left after my reading has been, that the chief interest in De Quincey lies in his style rather than in his matter. By this I mean the general impression; in many single specimens great charm does lie in the subject matter presented.

De Quincey believed prose phantasy original with himself. He was partly right, though his sources were more varied than he suspected. When the reader takes up one of these richly decorated and brocaded specimens on which De Quincey so carefully worked out his theories of prose, the impression resulting resembles the impression left after reading fine poetry. It has been well said that a careful perusal of De Quincey gives new admiration and

respect for the English language.

It seems to me, and I do not take it merely on Professor Masson's authority, that "Levana and Our Ladies of Sorrow," brief as it is, stands as the climax of De Quincey's work. He devoted his life to the perfection of a new and glorious prose style. Therefore he would himself be prone to select his masterpiece from the essays written in this prose style. None is more purely ideal, more purely poetic, than the "Levana." And, more, it goes further than any other of the phantasies in that it presents the most masterly incarnation of misery that literature possesses. Though all the rest of his writings should be lost, this brief essay would insure De Quincey permanency. It is purely romantic. What pseudo-classicist had the emotionalism, the imagination, the vividness of portrayal, the creative faculty, to leave so impassioned a memorial to a life of toil and suffering and acquaintance with misery, as Thomas De Quincey has left, a legacy from his unique existence, in the three "Ladies of Sorrow?"

De Quincey's life was pre-eminently romantic, both in habits and in appearance. His romanticism came naturally to him, without affectation. His figure reminded his friends of some Druid wight; his manners were part and parcel of his simplicity. Such events as the death of his sister Elizabeth and the battle of Waterloo affected him deeply. His early literary tastes tended strongly towards the pure classics, and toward romantic literature. Later in life he turned his attention toward the product of German writers who possessed strongly romantic tendencies. Much of his life was spent in unusual circumstances and environments; he lived a summer alone in Wales; was a solitary in London; an alien in

Edinburgh. He possessed the shyest of natures; in youth a craze for contempt, throughout life a fear of publicity, strongly characterised him. At all times he was prone to superstitious belief in presentiments. He loved solitude, and believed it necessary to creative impulse. Nature became his foster-mother; with her he communed day and night, and in all seasons of the year; many a night he slept under the open sky. He delighted in winter weather and the pleasures of a winter fireside. Artificial attempts to improve on natural beauty he detested. No man ever approached woman with more reverence than he; no man ever placed her on a more exalted pedestal. Yet perhaps no man was less prone to flatter than De Quincey; he did not avoid discussion of the limitations of woman. He ate opium freely from physical necessity, but as well for the power which it gave him over the dream world. He longed to reach a superior level of existence entirely beyond the sordid contact of earth. Dreams, he said, were given to man for a high and beneficent purpose. He studied them, indulged in them, and attained his greatest triumphs in his dream phantasies. He associated freely with the Lake school of romanticism; he disagreed with some of the poets; with others of them he was heart in heart. He had obtained a deep and various education in many subjects. But one or two men of his day could meet him on equal terms. In his admiration for literature he allowed his individual bent of mind to influence him and his criticisms, so that much of his critical work appears unequal to a critic of to-day. The doctrine that poetry is power, and nothing less, that didactic poetry properly does not exist, is perhaps the chief critical theory by which he should be remembered, though it is true that he did not originate this theory. It is of significance also in that it reveals his constant attempt to

reach the sublimest heights of creative power.

On the opposite side of the ledger several points muster themselves. While a lover of natural scenery, he could not enjoy it if on a too colossal scale, and it is noteworthy that he never entirely neglected the society of man, and the attractions of civilisation and culture. He abominated the French, and everything connected with modern France; though he saw in the French Revolution one cycle of a long progress of reform and advancement that he declared would go on through a long future, working ultimate good for universal society. He held firmly to a conservative belief in the British Constitution and in Tory politics. The doctrines of hereditary right, and the responsibility of the royal ministers. he ranked as the greatest doscoveries of civilisation, and, in the same vein, he believed in social classes and distinctions, and opposed universal suffrage for the fatal results he saw in it for any nation. While he admitted that war had been responsible for much horror and suffering, yet he doubted whether mankind would advance to a sufficiently high stage of development to do away with it for many generations, and he quoted Wordsworth in declaring that war has been an institution honored of God, used in the working out of His plans. Poverty, also, despite the promulgations of political economists, rests on Biblical foundation, and shall exist so long as governments retain any organization. In religion De Quincey was faithful to the Church of England communion. Critical on practically every other subject, he accepted the faith as his church taught it, without question, and without shadow of doubt.

It must be remembered, however, that these anti-romantic characteristics were not confined to De Quincey alone, but cropped

out in several of his contemporary romanticists. Lamb and Coleridge, for instance, re-entered the established church after testing Unitarianism, and other creeds "without the law." De Quincey differed from them in that he never abandoned the Church of England creed. Scott was just as strongly Tory as De Quincey; in this respect these two men were more markedly anti-romantic than any others of the school. Yet no one will mantain that Scott was not one of the great figures in the culmination of the movement. Or suppose that a question should arise regarding De Quincey's claim for or against political romanticism. While on the arguments just considered he would not rank as a political romanticist, yet his opinion of the French Revolution had more of the romantic in it than appears on the surface. He repudiated the excesses of the Revolution. But he recognised what Wordsworth and others failed to see: that the Reign of Terror was but an episode, and that the results of the Revolution, even imperfectly realized as they were at the end of De Quincey's life, were yet encouraging and satisfying.

Or, going to another phase of the question. De Quincey, despite his praise of Pope and Dryden, was undoubtedly romantic in his literary studies and criticism. His allegiance was given chiefly to the Lakists, and to the contemporary romanticists. Milton, Shakespeare, and Spenser he regarded as the great landmarks of world literature.

Thus he stands; Thomas De Quincey, Romanticist. And one of the most remarkable of the school.

FINIS.